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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

For success in the divine search, as in every other aspect of life, it is necessary to follow God's laws. To understand the secular knowledge available in a school, we have to learn from a teacher who knows it. So also to understand spiritual truths it is necessary to have a spiritual teacher, or guru, one who knows God.

When you are moving blindly through the valley of life, stumbling in darkness, you need the help of someone who has eyes. You need a guru. To follow one who is enlightened is the only way out of the great muddle that has been created in the world. I never found true happiness and freedom until I met my Guru, he who was spiritually interested in me and who had the wisdom to guide me.

Within your heart cry constantly for God. When you have convinced the Lord of your desire for Him, He will send someone — your guru — to teach you how to know Him. Only he who knows God can show others how to know Him. When I found such a one, my guru Brahmleen Mahant Gulab Giri Ji, I realized that God doesn't teach through

mystery, but through illumined souls. God is invisible, but He becomes visible through the intelligence and spiritual perception of one who is in constant communion with Him. There may be many teachers in one's life, but there is only one guru. In the guru-disciple relationship a divine law is fulfilled, as demonstrated even in the life of our rishis and gods.

He alone who is God-realized, and who has been commanded by God to redeem souls, is a guru. The teacher who accepts personally the adoration of others is merely a worshiper of his own ego. To find out whether a path is true, discriminate according to what sort of teacher is behind it, whether his actions show that he is led by God, or by his own ego. A leader who has no realization cannot show you the kingdom of God, no matter how large his following. All religions have done good, but blind belief in religious dogma keeps people spiritually ignorant and stagnant. Many times I have seen vast congregations singing God's name, but God was as far away from their consciousness as the distant stars. No one can be saved just by attending any spiritual course. The real way to freedom lies in Yoga, in scientific self-analysis, and in following one who has traversed the forest of theology and can lead you safely to God.

A Living Embodiment of Truth

Such a guru, ordained by God to help individuals in response to their deep prayers, is not an ordinary teacher; but is a human vehicle whose body, speech, mind, and spirituality God uses as a channel to attract and guide lost souls back to His home of immortality. We meet various teachers in the beginning, through our vague desire to know truth. But a guru is a living embodiment of scriptural truth and an agent of salvation appointed by God in response to a devotee's incessant petitions for release from the bondage of matter.

Delusion is destroyed by good company, by the company of saints, and by devotion to the messengers of God. Even the thought of saints will help you to remove delusion. It is not personal association so much as attunement of thought with the messenger of God that destroys delusion. The true guru has no desire to place himself in the hearts of others, but rather to awaken in their consciousness the consciousness of God. Master [Brahmleen Mahant Gulab Giri Ji] was like that: he was one with us — never any show of his greatness. If anyone in the ashram wanted recognition or a high seat of authority, Master would give him that position. But I wanted the heart of Master, the divine consciousness he had within; and as a result, he is forever here in my heart. That is the attunement you want with the great ones.

My Master said to me: "I will be your friend from now through eternity, no matter whether you are on the lowest mental plane or on the highest plane of wisdom. I will be

your friend even if you should err, for then you will need my friendship more than at any other time."

When I accepted my Master's unconditional friendship, he said: "Will you give me the same unconditional love?" He gazed at me with childlike trust.

"I will love you eternally, Gurudeva!"

"Ordinary love is selfish, darkly rooted in desires and satisfactions. Divine love is without condition, without boundary, without change. The flux of the human heart is gone forever at the transfixing touch of pure love." He added humbly, "If ever you find me falling from a state of God-realization, please promise to put my head on your lap and help to bring me back to the Cosmic Beloved we both worship."

It was only after we had made this spiritual pact that I began to understand fully the significance of a guru to a disciple. I never found complete satisfaction, comfort, and God contact until I attuned myself with unconditional loyalty and devotion to the divine consciousness of my Guru.

The Best of Givers

To the world God speaks only through His enlightened devotees. Therefore, the wisest of all actions is to tune in with the will of the guru who is sent to you by the Lord as a response to your soul's desire. He is not a guru who is self-proclaimed as such; he is a

guru who is asked by God to bring others back to Him. When there is a little spiritual desire, the Lord sends books and teachers to further inspire you; and when your desire is stronger, he sends a real guru....

There are teachers who expect their followers to be always at their beck and call, ready to obey instantly; and if they don't, the teacher becomes angry. But a spiritual teacher who knows God and is truly a guru never thinks of himself as a teacher at all. He beholds God's presence in everyone, and feels no resentment if some students disregard his wishes. The Hindu scriptures say that those who tune in with the wisdom of a true guru make it possible for the guru to help them. "Comprehending that (the wisdom from a guru), thou, O Arjuna! wilt not again fall into delusion."

The friendship that exists between guru and disciple is eternal. There is complete surrender, there is no compulsion, when a disciple accepts the guru's training.

I can think of no relationship in this world greater than that which I had with my Master. The guru-disciple relationship is love in its supreme form. I once left his ashram, thinking I could more successfully seek God in the Himalayas. I was mistaken; and I soon knew I had done wrong. Yet when I came back, he treated me as if I had never left. His greeting was so casual; instead of rebuking me, he calmly remarked, "Let us see what we have to eat this morning."

"But Master," I said, "aren't you angry with me for leaving?"

"Why should I be?" he replied. "I do not expect anything from others, so their actions cannot be in opposition to wishes of mine. I would not use you for my own ends; I am happy only in your own true happiness."

When he said that, I fell at his feet and cried, "For the first time there is someone who truly loves me!"

Even though I ran away from the ashram to seek God, his love for me remained unchanged. He didn't even rebuke me... I had never imagined anyone could be so interested in me. He loved me for myself. He wanted perfection for me. He wanted me to be supremely happy. That was his happiness. He wanted me to know God; to be with the Divine Mother for whom my heart longed.

Was that not divine love he expressed? to wish constantly to guide me in the path of goodness and love? When that love is developed between the guru and disciple, the disciple has no desire to manipulate the master, nor does the master seek control of the disciple. Supreme reason and judgment govern their relationship; there is no love like this. And I tasted of that love from my Master.

The guru is the awakened God, awakening the sleeping God in the disciple. Through sympathy and deep vision, a true guru sees the Lord suffering in the physically,

mentally, and spiritually poor, and that is why he feels it his joyous duty to assist them. He tries to feed the hungry God in the destitute, to stir the sleeping God in the ignorant, to love the unconscious God in the enemy, and to waken the half asleep God in the yearning devotee. And by a gentle touch of love, he instantaneously arouses the almost fully awakened God in the advanced seeker. The guru is, among all men, the best of givers. Like the Lord Himself, his generosity knows no boundaries.

May God help us through this journey and he help us to reach on destination.

I would like to thank you all for your unconditional support in this journey and I hope that the same will remain in place for me in future.

Thank you,

Mahant Reema Giri Ji

(Adhishtatri Sanchalika)

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT WORLD

Over the years, countless people have asked us: what is the Spirit world like? Answering this question is both easy and difficult. It is easy because so much information concerning life in Spirit has been given to us. It is difficult because much of that information tends to be confusing or, at least, contradictory.

There is only one way in which we can be given information about what it is like in the Spirit world. That information has to come from someone who is there, first hand. And there are two ways in which someone can go to the Spirit world: either temporarily, through some type of out of body experience or expansion of consciousness; or permanently through death. Both have been sources of good, insightful information on what the Spirit world is all about.

Indeed, most of what we have learned about the Spirit world comes from those who reside there. Obviously, that information has to be passed through mediums and channels. The problem lies in the oftentimes contradictory information given to us. Oddly enough, much of the contradiction seems to come from within the more traditional Spiritualist movement.

As any student of mediumship knows, the preconceived ideas and prejudices of the medium can, very often, color or influence the information which passes through his or her mediumship. It is the wise medium who understands this fact clearly and, therefore,

endeavors to separate himself or herself, as completely as possible, from the communication coming from those in Spirit.

Horace Leaf, in his book "What Mediumship Is" (Spiritualist Press, London; 1976), pages 133-134, describes this quite admirably by stating:

"Mediums are not like gramophone records; they are living beings with brain and mind governed by lifelong habits. Every person's mind is full of tendencies, capacities, desires, ideas and habits. These are so vital that, in the main, they govern the way in which the individual thinks and behaves.

"All controlling entities desirous of transmitting philosophical, religious and spiritual ideas through a medium find themselves as much under the control of the medium as the medium is under theirs. The consequence is, if the medium is ignorant and his mind untrained to serious thinking, the less successful will the speech be. The reverse is also true. An educated medium with a well-trained mind will, with few exceptions, produce better results."

So, how do we come to any reasonable and truthful conclusions concerning life in Spirit? In other words, how do we separate the wheat from the chaff? Really quite simple: truth ALWAYS passes the test of time. New age fads and fancies come and go with the winds of time and people's folly; but truth remains steadfast, eternal, constant,

and is generally free from contradiction. And here is where we must be discerning in our search for truth.

Much truthful information regarding life in Spirit has, indeed, come from with the Modern Spiritualist movement, and for this we should be eternally grateful; but, far more has come to us from outside Modern Spiritualism's ranks and members.

It is unwise to think that Spiritualism had its birth in 1848, with the events at Hydesville, New York. 1848 marked the beginning of a movement, not the beginning of Spiritualism itself. What happened in 1848 marks the rebirth -- or reincarnation -- of that which has been with us from the moment we appeared on this great Earth plane. The events in Hydesville also marked the seedlings of a movement which would eventually emerge from within the home circle, that nursery for so much of mediumship's phenomenal manifestations.

Spiritualism was given birth with the creation of the spirits (that's you and me); Modern Spiritualism was born in 1848. And there is a difference between Spiritualism and the Modern Spiritualist movement.

For more information on the founding of the Modern Spiritualist movement, please see our section on Modern Spiritualism.

What many Modern Spiritualists fail to accept is that while their movement was being fashioned, so, too, were other movements of the Spirit; most notably Theosophy. Furthermore, an abundance of information regarding life in Spirit has been given to us through mediums and channels outside the more traditional Spiritualist Movement. Alice Bailey, Edgar Cayce, Jane Roberts, Eileen Garrett, as well as the multitude of investigators from within the Theosophical movement, are but a few.

What is most intriguing about this is that, once you step outside the more traditional Spiritualist circles, the contradictions concerning life in the Spirit world seem to disappear.

What does this mean, and why do we mention this fact before getting into the meat of the subject of this series of articles? It means something very important; something which our Church has been promulgating since its founding, in 1883: mediumship; life after death; spirit communication; and, yes, even Spiritualism, itself, belong to no group, no Church, no denomination, and no faith. These are universal elements of the Spirit, and the Spirit knows no boundaries.

Having said this, let us, now, get to our subject: Life in Spirit.

Where is the Spirit World?

The Spirit world is right here, where we are. We do not have to travel in order to get to the Spirit world. It is not separated from the Earth plane by distance, as we perceive distance. What separates the Earth plane from the Spirit world is DIMENSION.

It is through the doorway of consciousness and dimension that the Spirit must pass in order to enter the Spirit world. That is the doorway through which we shall all pass at some point in time, when we leave this Earth plane. How we get to that doorway varies with people, conditions, and circumstances. What we experience, once we pass through that doorway varies, to some degree, with those circumstances. But it is the same doorway for all of us. Kings, paupers, prophets, messiahs, tyrants, saints, rich, poor, and everyone in between all pass through the same doorway of life.

The Spirit world exists in a higher rate of vibration than does our three-dimensional Earth plane. From time to time, people experience a heightened or extended sense of perception, and they catch glimpses of this amazing world. Mediums have trained themselves to do this, somewhat at will. An out of body experience, or OBE, happens when the spirit or consciousness separates itself from the confines of the body and brain; thus becoming free to experience other worlds.

Every night, while most of us sleep, our spirits separate from the earthly confines and visit the Spirit world. We often experience that visitation through dreams. Sometimes,

those dreams are colored by our fears, cares, and concerns; sometimes not. Many are the people who claim they have visited departed loved ones in their dreams. The skeptic will say that such experiences result from wishful thinking, manifested in those dreams. But, most people know better: these precious experiences are far more than wishful thinking.

So, you see, the first thing we have to understand about the Spirit world is that we do not have to die in order for us to visit this grand place. Furthermore, we can be in touch with our departed loved ones, even while on earth.

What Do We Do in the Spirit World?

This is a question which many people ask. It stems from the fact that we are so ingrained to perceiving life only through the physical form that we simply cannot imagine what one can do without a physical body. For so many, no body and no earth translate into NO LIFE.

In Spirit, we do not go to jobs, we do not have to earn money, we do not have to worry about mortgages and food on the table; these are all aspects of earthly life. So, what's left? Very simple: LIFE. We engage in life and living.

What motivates us on the Earth plane will, very likely, motivate us in Spirit. Death accomplishes one thing: it allows us to shed the earthly body and move through the

doorway. We do not change dramatically, nor do we become all-knowing and perfect. We are the same person on that side of the threshold as we are on this side of the threshold. For many, this is disappointing. It would be nice to think that death suddenly removes all problems, all obstacles, all sin and evil, and all ignorance. That is not the arrangement we made with our Creator.

We learn, very often through struggle, and we grow through hard work. Nothing of the Spirit is handed to us on a silver platter. That would be cheap and not beneficial to us at all. Thus it is in the Spirit world.

In Spirit, we seek to communicate with our earthly loved ones. We meet our already departed loved ones, and there is a grand reunion of sorts. Spirit tells us that it is so wondrously amazing when we meet those loving family members, waiting at the threshold to welcome us into the new life. People who suffer long term illness, as they come closer to the time of death, often see their loved ones, in Spirit, waiting for them at the gate. This gives them joy, comfort, and a sense of knowing that everything will be OK.

Our loves, our hopes, our aspirations, our dreams are all part of us, and we are given every opportunity to follow those dreams in Spirit. Thus, the Spirit world is a world of tremendous opportunity and fulfillment, even more so than the Earth plane.

In Spirit, we devote much time to assessing the recent earth life. We look at the successes and the failures, and we do so with unclouded vision. There are special Spirit helpers who guide and assist us in this. For some, this can be very painful, as they face themselves and their earthly deeds. But, even for these unfortunate souls, there is always love and guidance given, as they wend their way through the consequences of what may have been a very evil life.

There are halls of learning and great schools of the Spirit, where we are given the opportunity to learn and become wise in our knowledge. Many of these great schools of learning have counterparts on the Earth plane. The Mystery Schools of the past are an example of this.

There is the opportunity to pray and offer healing from Spirit, just as we can do here on earth.

In all of this, we await the arrival of our earthly loved ones, as our previously departed loved ones awaited our own arrival.

As time passes on, we integrate more and more of our recent earth life and its experiences into the essence of the Spirit. More and more of our family and loved ones join us. And eventually, we move further along the Spirit world, into areas which are more separated, in terms of vibration, from the Earth plane. We can always draw back,

closer to the earthly condition, in order to communicate with earthly loved ones or family members. So, we are never separated from our beloved, no matter where they or we may be. Please keep this in mind.

What About Surroundings?

The whole of the Spirit world is comprised of various levels of consciousness and states of vibration. As we move along in the Spirit world, we pass through these various stages. There are even varying levels of vibration within each of the afterlife stages. In fact, we experience a sort of death, as we proceed from one level of Spirit into another. We shall not discuss this, as it goes beyond the scope of this series of articles.

The area of the Spirit world to which we all go, once we pass from the Earth plane, is known as the Astral world, or the Astral plane. It is here where we spend a good amount of our time assessing the most recent earthly life, while awaiting the arrival of our earthly loved ones. It is here, also, where much of the more difficult aspects of the recent earth life are confronted and healed, to the degree that we are willing to confront them and to the degree that they can be healed, according to our overall stage of spiritual progression.

Freedom of choice is inherent to all Spirit. We are healed and we experience transformation only to the degree that we are willing to confront and change that which

must be changed. There are countless Spirit emissaries and helpers, always anxious to guide and inspire us along the pathway of spiritual healing and transformation, but change can only come about through our own desire to change and our own willingness to work through that which needs to be changed.

Therefore, better we should endeavor to make those changes now, while on the Earth plane, than when we arrive in Spirit. Why? Because, in Spirit, there is so much to learn and to experience; there is so much wonder to behold and incorporate into our selves. There is so much pure love and beneficence to share in. All this, and so much more, is available to us; BUT, only to the degree that we can experience and receive it all. So, let us be healed and develop those loving qualities, now, here on Earth, that we might be free to experience all this wonder, once we pass into the Spirit world.

It is the Astral plane which is most closely linked to the Earth plane. In fact, within the Astral plane there exists an exact replica of the Earth plane, with houses, cities, mountains, people, etc. It is not really a replica; rather, within the Astral plane is the astral counterpart of our Earth plane. Everything on this earth, ourselves included, has an astral counterpart. Remember, we are Spirit in body. Our true home and our roots are in Spirit, not on the earth. We "visit" the earth, from time to time, in order to experience it and its lessons. Therefore, even while on the Earth plane, we are Spirit,

with our connection to the Spirit world. This astral counterpart represents the link, so to speak, between us and the Spirit world.

Everything which happens on the earth -- individually and collectively -- has an impact within the Astral plane. So, the Astral plane is inhabited by two types of spirits: those who have passed from the Earth plane and are, still, within the Astral plane; and us -- or our astral counterparts. In fact, without going into complicated discussions, suffice it to say that we live within and experience multiple levels of life and consciousness, even while on the Earth plane. It so happens that, right now, our focus of attention and concentration is on the Earth plane. But, that does not deny the fact that we are rooted in the Spirit.

If we were not living on multiple levels of Spirit, simultaneously, then we could not experience such things as mediumship, extended sensory perception, out of body experiences, or, even, dreams. It is because we are living life AS SPIRIT ON EARTH that we are able to shift from one level of awareness to another, back and forth; sometimes spontaneously, other times quite intentionally.

Thus, there is a strong link and connection between the Earth plane and the Astral plane. It is through the Astral plane that so much of the spiritual help and assistance is

given to us. The Astral plane represents the doorway between the Earth plane and the higher levels of the Spirit world.

The Astral plane has been subject to much confusion and misinformation. It is called the Astral plane because, within it, there is light and sparkling energy, very much like stars. Astral originates from the Latin "aster," meaning star. Because the Astral plane is where we deal with our recent earthly difficulties, people tend to consider it to be a place of punishment and negativity. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Within the Astral plane, there is offered the greatest opportunity to set right that which may have gone wrong and to become even more intimately involved with our family and friends, in a truly spiritual manner. What is even more amazing is that, once we step through the Astral plane and enter the next level of the Spirit world, the degree of love and intimacy magnifies itself a thousand-fold.

Indeed, it is a place of work; but of far greater significance, the Astral plane is a place of healing, love, and compassion.

Because the Astral plane is so closely linked to the Earth plane and its inhabitants, many proclaim that it is inhabited by countless spirits who are lost or earthbound. NONSENSE! The idea of lost souls and earthbound spirits makes great movies, sells

lots of books, and, unfortunately, gives many unscrupulous psychics and mediums lots of work; but is not based on fact.

Very few are they who become "stuck" between "here" and "there". Some certainly do have difficulty in making their earthly transition, but always there are loved ones and special Spirit friends who endeavor to help in that transition. And, if for some reason, a spirit is just not ready or willing to make the transition complete, he or she will fall into a sleep state and remain quiet, until the time comes for a reawakening into the Spirit world. Furthermore, that reawakening is aided through love and healing by those special Spirit helpers. Such spirits do NOT go around haunting the Earth plane; nor do they sit around just waiting to possess a weak earthling; nor do they hang around graveyards or around bars, inhaling smoke and the smell of alcohol.

Thus it is in the Spirit world; or at least the first phase of the Spirit world, immediately following physical death.

Would it surprise you to hear that there are many people who would prefer NOT to believe in an afterlife? For many, the prospect of what they may face after death can be quite horrifying.

"When you're dead, you're dead" is a way of looking at life, grounded totally in the physical world and its body; but, for many, this concept of life offers great comfort. Why?

Because believing this way allows the individual to do whatever he or she wishes to whomever he or she wishes, without having to worry about "paying the price" at some later time, in some other realm of life.

But, alas, this profoundly sad way of looking at life is not based on fact, and eventually, the reality of life after death stands before us all, face-to-face.

The issue of life's consequences is fundamental to religious thought and persuasion. Most religions of the earth accept this basic concept of life: we all have to face our mistakes, at some point or another. For aeons of time, people have been "whipped into shape" by religious leaders and their threats of eternal damnation and fire. Satan plays a very important role in religion; unfortunately, to the point where it often seems as if Satan is given more credence and power than God, Himself.

So many people believe: Live a good life, and you go to Heaven. Sin, and you go to Hell. Accept a person as Lord and Savior, and you will find that special seat next to the throne of God.

How can this be? Would God discriminate for some and against others? Would God open His arms to a particular religion, while turning His back to those of other faiths, or those people who may not utter that special formula of salvation?

So, what is the truth regarding Heaven and Hell? How do we deal with life's injustices; those perpetrated by ourselves and those perpetrated against us by others?

Ancient teaching states that we must all deal with life's errors, first by facing those mistakes, then by learning from those mistakes, then by forgiving ourselves and others, and, finally, by not repeating those mistakes. The Lord's Prayer asks God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Obviously, it would be far better to begin this process of forgiveness, healing, and transformation sooner than later; that is, while on the Earth plane. But, so often we pass into the Spirit world without even having begun this process.

The Wonder of the Spirit World

Life is life is life is life. And Spirit is Spirit is Spirit is Spirit. There is no beginning and no end to life's journey. It is a continuous experience, sometimes here and sometimes there; sometimes within a physical body, but most often without a physical body. We are not alive at certain times and dead at others. We are always alive. Therefore, there is always the opportunity to grow and expand in our awareness. Likewise, there is always the opportunity to be healed and transformed of our transgressions.

In the Spirit world, we are given greater opportunity to correct the errors of the past because, in the Spirit world, we tend to see things from a greater perspective. We are

able to perceive a greater part of the whole. We are not quite so blinded by the earthly personality and its multitude of passions. But, even in Spirit, we will change ONLY to the degree that we are willing and able to do so. Nothing in life is ever forced upon the Spirit, except the consequence of his or her actions, according to the Great Law of Karma, or Cause and Effect.

Grace and salvation are not handed to us on a silver platter. Jesus Christ did not come to earth, suffer as he did, experience the horror of crucifixion, and reveal the wonder and mystery of resurrection, so that we would be given an excuse to sin our lives away and, upon reciting a few words, be let off the hook, so to speak. That type of belief cheapens and denigrates everything that Jesus stood for. Furthermore, it minimizes God's Grace.

Without going into too much detail, the Spirit world can be divided into two basic areas or levels of experience: the Astral plane and the Mental plane. Actually, there are more, but for our intents and purposes, let us leave it at these two.

The Astral plane is where we all go, immediately upon departing this earthly life, through physical death. Everyone goes there and spends a certain amount of time within this area of the Spirit world. It is within the Astral plane that we deal, to a great degree, with those areas of healing, transformation, and forgiveness mentioned above. It is here

where we gather with those loved ones with whom we shared the recent earth life and determine, amongst ourselves, what we all need to deal with and how we shall go about correcting the mistakes of the past. In this, there are special Spirit emissaries or angels who help us in this process of assessment. We look at the successes and the failures of our recent earth life and its many relationships, and we determine what needs to be changed, what needs to be forgiven, what needs to be healed, and what needs to be transformed.

Because the Astral plane is where we deal with some of the more negative elements of ourselves, many refer to it as a place of evil and negativity. This could not be further from the truth. It is a world of confrontation, assessment, evaluation, and looking at ourselves face-to-face. Indeed, for some these processes may be difficult, but the results can be summed up in two words: HEALING and TRANSFORMATION.

Some spirits may consider this aspect of life -- looking at one's self honestly and face-to-face -- as a kind of Hell. But, then again, there are those who consider any aspect of life which is challenging and confronting as Hell. Thus, for some, "Hell on Earth" is a very real state of mind and consciousness.

Now, this brings us to the question of Hell. Is there a specific place, known as Hell, where all the sinners are doomed to eternal fire and damnation? Absolutely not!

Hell is more a state of mind rather than a place of condemnation. God condemns no person to a life of pain and suffering. God gives us all freedom of choice, but demands that we be accountable to Him, to ourselves, and to each other for the choices which we make.

Eventually, after many earthly incarnations, little by little, we begin to see the Light, so to speak. We recognize that, as Spirit, we are all created in God's image as Spirit. We recognize that we were born out of love and should live life in this love.

For some, these lessons come painfully slow, while others learn a bit more quickly. Does this make one spirit better than another? No. It simply means that one spirit may be further along the pathway to Heaven than another. God is a Respector of no person, in that He favors no one of His children above another. One of the hymns in our hymnal states: "In His eyes there is no great nor small."

The Second Death

Now, what about Heaven? Unlike Hell, Heaven IS a place to which we will all eventually travel. Once we deal with as many of the negative aspects of the self as we can, while in the Astral plane, we experience what can be considered a second death. We enter a very brief period of slumber and we step across yet another doorway of life and enter the Mental plane.

It is within the higher levels of the Mental plane -- we will not discuss the various levels of the great Mental plane -- that we experience what can be termed a state of Heaven. In fact, Hindu texts refer to this level of the Spirit world as Devachan, or Heaven.

Devachan is not the ultimate state of oneness, nor is it the final "resting place" of the Spirit, but it is a place where we can truly experience the wonder, majesty, beauty, and joy of the Human experience, to the degree that each person is capable of so doing.

It is here where we finally reap the rewards of our efforts, to the degree that we have worked at transformation and healing. Therefore, within this level of the Spirit world, the individual experiences the Light of God's Love and Creation to the degree that he or she is able to do so. And how is that degree measured? It is measured by the degree of honesty, love, charity, and kindness which that individual is capable of manifesting outwardly in his or her life.

Devachan, although a place of immense beauty, love, and joy, does have its limitations. Therefore, Devachan is not the true Heaven or the final resting place of the spirit. But, it is a place where the human spirit can experience total joy and oneness, to the degree that he or she can do so. And every spirit goes to this place, within the Spirit world, no matter what kind of life he or she may have conducted while on the Earth plane. In fact, it is from here where the next earthly incarnation is planned and set into motion.

It is as if God allows each and every one of us to touch the best and the greatest that we are, in order to inspire us to become even better and more great, as we prepare to move onto a new earthly life.

This is not ultimate Heaven, but it is as good as it gets, at least for the time being. That Heaven will come to us when we are finally capable of experiencing our oneness with God and with each other. That Heaven is the ultimate home from which all emerged and to which we shall all return at some timeless point in time. That Heaven is truly cosmic in nature and beyond any human's comprehension.

The Heaven that we are talking about -- Devachan -- is about as close to that state of ultimate joy that we can experience at this point in our travels. To the individual in Devachan, there is total joy and wholeness, even though on a grander scheme, it is limited.

Life is like traveling from A to Z, with Z as the destination. If an individual has traveled only as far as K, then, to him, K will seem like Z, because K is the limit to what he can consciously experience. The beauty of life is that, as we learn and evolve, we expand our current limitations - K - and recognize that there is an L, looming at the distance. We, then, strive to move onto L; then onto M, etc.

Thus, life -- in and out of physical form -- becomes a process of continuously extending beyond what we perceive as our limitations, that we may experience wider and more expansive limitations. Eventually, all limitation will be gone and we will all be one with God. The one will become the One. Etched within the cornerstone of our original Church building are the Alpha and Omega -- the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, representing the beginning at the end -- superimposed, one over the other. This indicates that the beginning is the end, and the end is the beginning. Both have communed and become one.

Therefore, there is but one time that is of essence; that point in time where past and future meet: the PRESENT. Thus, the importance of living the moment -- the present -- to its fullest. Remember: you are, today, the result of what you have been yesterday; and you shall be, tomorrow, the result of what you are today.

Who are we? What makes us who we are? What happens to us when we pass through that elusive doorway, known as death, and arise within the Spirit world? Are we the same person, or do we become absorbed within some cosmic or collective consciousness?

To the non-reincarnationist, the answer is quite plain and simple. "Uncle Joe" will remain "Uncle Joe" in the Spirit world, perhaps forever. Traditional Spiritualism teaches

that a child who passes from the Earth plane at a young age will grow up, physically, in the Spirit world. How this thought ever wound up within a philosophy which promulgates the reality and eternal nature of the SPIRIT has always amazed me.

If we consider the truth of reincarnation, the answer to these basic questions may seem a bit more complex, yet more fulfilling. Am I the person who just died, or am I the person who died in a previous incarnation; or the one before that; etc.?

Reincarnation has never promulgated that we are alive at certain times and not alive at other times. Nor has it ever promulgated that we are less alive at any one point in time than at another. Reincarnation simply recognizes the truth that the Spirit lives eternally, without ANY break of consciousness; sometimes clothed within a physical body, upon the Earth plane, but, most often, not clothed within physical form.

So, when our loved ones pass into the Spirit world, what happens to their loves; their likes and dislikes; their characteristic features which made them unique to us; their hopes and dreams; their memories? They survive and live. Why? Because these are all elements of the Spirit, not the body.

Having said this, what happens to all those influences which were developed in previous incarnations? Have they become lost within the maze of cosmic

consciousness? No! They live as well. How? They live as character traits which make our loved ones who they are.

We are who we are, based upon who we have been. Likewise, we shall be who we shall be, based on who we are. The key to life is living in the present; the moment of the now. The present shall always be the stepping stone between the past and the future.

When we pass into the Spirit world, very little of an internal nature changes. We do not suddenly become angels, nor are we suddenly privy to all the secrets of the Universe. These come to us in time and with work and study, here and there. We simply step across the threshold of life and continue to live in another state of existence. Certainly, for some, the very fact that they have survived death is a profound revelation and changes them deeply. But, for the most part, we remain pretty much the same people on that side of the doorway as we were on this side.

Eventually, as time passes by and more and more of our earthly loved ones join us, in Spirit, our ties to the earthly life and its recent incarnation begin to weaken. Why should that be the case? Because the people whom we loved and to whom we desired to maintain a connection are now with us in the Spirit world.

And here is where the remarkable process of spiritual synthesis takes place. As more and more of our earthly loved ones join us, in Spirit, and the earthly ties of the most

recent incarnation become weaker, we begin to perceive ourselves and others less through the eyes of the recent earthly personality, and more through the eyes of the Spirit, who we truly are.

This allows us to perceive ourselves not simply through the experience of the recent earth life, but as a whole, living Spirit, which has had many such earthly experiences. We begin to perceive ourselves in eternal totality, rather than in periodic chunks of time. In this, we appreciate more and more our spiritual quest through life and its many earthly incarnations, and we begin to understand that each life is but a small segment of a greater whole. And, like life in general, the whole is always far greater than the sum of the parts.

For some, this process of integration and synthesis begins earlier than for others. Some find it more difficult to "let go" of the recent earthly personality; but, eventually, we all do, to the degree that we are each able.

Does this diminish the importance or relevance of the most recent earthly life? I do not think it does. In fact, I believe that, when we see things through the eyes of the Spirit and we perceive a greater whole, we begin appreciating just how important each of the parts really are.

Ultimately, this allows us to have far greater and far more meaningful relationships with our loved ones; not only those loved ones from the most recent earthly life, but those loved ones from prior earthly incarnations.

This can all be compared to a puzzle. We pick up a piece of the puzzle, look at it, and try to figure out where it fits. As more and more pieces are picked up and placed in their proper positions, we begin to see a picture unfolding. If we look only at one or a few of the pieces, we see only a very small part of the picture; sometimes not even recognizing what the picture is. But, when we step aside and look at the puzzle as a whole and not focus upon any one piece, then and only then do we truly appreciate the picture which we have painted through the journey of our experiences. Remove any one piece and a gaping hole is created.

Thus it is with life in Spirit. Once we join our loved ones, and other loved ones join us, we begin to step away from that one incarnation and we begin the process of deciphering the whole picture of our journey and integrating the piece of the recent incarnation into the picture we have been painting all along.

Finally, at some point in the future, we begin to realize that the picture must grow and expand in some way; in other words, a new piece has to be created and integrated into

the picture. Thus, we begin the process of incarnating back onto the Earth plane, that we may create this new piece.

Now, the questions is: How are we going to fit that new piece into a picture which seems complete? We do so by allowing the picture to grow and expand in some way, thus creating a "space" for that new piece which we are about to create. Thus, the picture -- that is, our journey through life -- continues to grow and grow and grow! Amazing, is it not?

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

Guru Kripa Adhyatmik Chetna Sansthan located in rural surrounding the place is Dhandhera in the State of Uttaranchal (INDIA).

This initiative is functioning as a 'not for profit' model. The aim is to emulate and replicate this model to other parts of the country particularly in the economically back ward states and in turn help the Government to implement its Social responsibility in the real sense of the term.

The concept of this type can very well be applied to this model. The facility is geared up to handle and support all national social responsibilities.

CONSTITUTION

A Society Registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860.

REGISTERED OFFICE

Bhawani Shankar Ashram, Colonel Enclave,
Dhandhera, Roorkee-247667, Distt.:- Haridwar,UTTARAKHAND

OTHER REGISTRATIONS

Society is registered under section 12A and 80G of Income Tax Act, 1961.

THE MISSION OF THE UNIT

"To provide quality products accessible and affordable to all round the clock".

OBJECTIVE

1. To ensure availability of quality spiritual and welfare services accessible to all without any discrimination or bias.
2. To provide the availability of helping hand round the clock 24/7.
3. To enable access of the products to the community at an affordable price.
4. To run the facility in a transparent manner.
5. To act as a role model for others to emulate.

WORKS DONE IN LAST YEAR

Guru Kripa Adhyatmik Chetna Sansthan has done following activities in last year:-

1. Regulars Satsang in Ashram by society members and invited guests.
2. Special pooja on Shivratri
3. Bhandara and medical camp in Kanwar Season
4. Various Jhankees and other program on Shri Krishn Janmashtmi
5. Bhandara on Chhath
6. Marriage of Tulsi Shaligram according to hindu rituals
7. Shree-mad Bhagvat Katha
8. Holi Milan Program
9. Free marriage of a Poor Girl
10. Moorti Sthapna of Mahant Gulab Giri ji
11. Free eye checkup and treatment camp
12. Hanuman Jayanti Program

ANNUAL REPORT
F.Y. 2016-17

**GURU KRIPA ADHYATMIK
CHETNA SANSTHAN**

**Shree Bhawani Shankar Ashram,
Colonial Enclave, Roorkee-247667,
Distt: - Haridwar, Uttarakhand, INDIA.**

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

Every living creature is the son of the supreme lord, and he doesn't tolerate even an ant being killed. One has to pay for it. A human being has no need to kill animals because god has supplied so many nice things. Of all kinds of animal killing, the killing of cows is most vicious because the cow gives us all kinds of pleasure by supplying milk. Cow slaughter is an act of the greatest type of ignorance.

In the present age (kali Yuga) the milk man draws milk from the cow and when there is no milk the cow is sent to the slaughter house. These greatly sinful acts are responsible for all troubles in present day society. The influence of this age will keep them in the darkest of ignorance. Despite all Endeavors for peace and prosperity, they must try to see the cows and the bulls happy in all respects.

The cow, for instance, gives milk but she doesn't drink that milk. She eats grass and grain and her milk is designated as food for human beings. Such is the arrangement of the supreme lord.

The cow is the representative of the earth, and the bull is the emblem of moral principles. When the bull and cow are in a joyful mood, it is to be understood that the people of the world are also in a joyfully mood. The reason is that the bull helps

production of grains in the agriculture fields and the cow delivers milk, the miracle of aggregate food values.

Keeping in all these things in view Ashram has decided to start a Gaushala for protection of cows. You can help us by joining the our proposed goshala in the efforts to protect cows and bulls. We will protect the cows throughout their lifetime whether they give milk or not , and the bulls even if no longer able to work.We will retain them so they can grow old and die in a natural way.

The supreme lord Sri Krishna is glorified as "Go brahmana hitayacha", which means the well wisher of cows and brahmanas. By his personal example he wanted to teach us the value of protecting cows.

Protect the cows and bulls and save humanity and the earth .The goal of cow protection is the peace of all humanity.

Guru Kripa Adhyatmik Chetna Sansthan is taking a project exclusively for protecting cows in the vicinity of the ashram.

Whoever serves mother cow, they will obtain eternal happiness and good health .All his fear will be vanquished and their house will become the abode for peace.(mahabharat, Vishnu dharmottar khanda).

The human society, therefore should maintain these two important animals very carefully so that they can wander everywhere in cheerfulness.

Importance of cow and her protection

Protection of Cows is the single-most important principle towards saving the whole world from both moral and spiritual degradation. Simply by protection of Cows all the wonderful benefits of religiosity and piety will be automatically achieved without any

separate endeavor. This is because Cows are as beloved to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, as even saintly brahmanas.

In scriptures it is said, namo brahmanya-devaya go-brahmana-hitaya ca jagad-dhitaya krsnaya govindaya namo namah, "My Lord, You are the well-wisher of the Cows and the brahmanas, and You are the well-wisher of the entire human society and world." (Visnu Purana 1.19.65) Lord Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the prime protector of brahminical culture and the Cow. Without knowing and respecting these pleasing personalities, one cannot realize the science of God, and without this knowledge, any welfare activities or humanitarian propaganda cannot be successful. SB 4.21.38 purport

For the Cowherd men and the Cows, Krishna is the supreme friend. His pastimes in Gokula, His dhama, are always favorable to the brahmanas and the Cows. His first business is to give all comfort to the Cows and the brahmanas. In fact, comfort for the brahmanas is secondary, and comfort for the Cows is His first concern. Because of His presence, all people would overcome all difficulties and always be situated in transcendental bliss. SB10.8.16

Krishna says in Srimad Bhagavatam, "I can be worshiped within the Cows by offerings of grass and other suitable grains and paraphernalia for the pleasure and health of the Cows, and one may worship Me within the Vaishnavas by offering loving friendship to them and honoring them in all respects." SB11.11.43

Human society needs only sufficient grain and sufficient Cows to solve its economic problems. All other things but these two are artificial necessities created by man to kill his valuable life at the human level and waste his time in things which are not needed. Lord Krishna, as the teacher of human society, personally showed by His acts that the

mercantile community, or the vaisyas or business or trading community, should herd Cows and Bulls and thus give protection to these valuable animals. According to smṛti regulation, the Cow is the mother and the Bull the father of the human being. The Cow is the Mother because just as one sucks the breast of one's Mother, human society takes Cow's milk. Similarly, the Bull is the Father of human society because the Father earns for the children just as the Bull tills the ground to produce food grains. Human society will kill its spirit of life by killing the Father and the Mother. SB 3.2.29 purport

The Cow is the most important animal for developing the human body to perfection. The body can be maintained by any kind of foodstuff, but Cow's milk is particularly essential for developing the finer tissues of the human brain so that one can understand the intricacies of transcendental knowledge. A civilized man is expected to live on foodstuffs comprising fruits, vegetables, grains, sugar and milk. The Bull helps in the agricultural process of producing grain, etc., and thus in one sense the Bull is the father of humankind, whereas the Cow is the Mother, for she supplies milk to human society. A civilized man is therefore expected to give all protection to the Bulls and Cows. SB 3.5.7 purport

Lord Krishna's Example

To teach by example, the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna and Lord Balaram show us when They descend into this world, how important is to protect, love and serve Cows and Bulls. Krishna is known as Gopala (protector of the Cows) or Govinda (one who gives pleasure to the Cows). Lord Balaram represents plowing the land for agriculture and therefore always carries a plow in His hand, whereas Krishna tends Cows and therefore carries a flute in His hand. Thus the two brothers represent kṛṣi-rakṣa (protecting Bulls by engaging them in farming) and go-rakṣa (protecting the Cows). 10.5.20 Purport

"Offering respect to the Cows will help the devotee to diminish the reactions to his past sinful activities" (Skanda Purana)

Vrindavan's Cows are constant reminders of Krishna's ecstatic Cow herding lilas (pastimes). By serving the Cows one receives tremendous spiritual benefit. Feeding grains to the Cows, offering puja, or simply a scratch under the neck will please these peaceful personalities and attracts the attention of Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Govinda. The Gautamiya Tantra says, "One should gently scratch the body of a Cow, offer her a mouthful of green grass and reverentially circumambulate her. If Cows are maintained nicely and comfortably, Lord Gopal will be pleased."

Thereafter, mother Yashoda and Rohini, along with the other elderly gopis, waved about the switch of a Cow to give full protection to the child Sri Krishna.

PURPORT: When Krishna was saved from such a great danger, mother Yashoda and Rohini were principally concerned, and the other elderly gopis, who were almost equally concerned, followed the activities of mother Yashoda and Rohini. Here we find that in household affairs, ladies could take charge of protecting a child simply by taking help from the Cow. As described here, they knew how to wave about the switch of a Cow so as to protect the child from all types of danger. There are so many facilities afforded by Cow protection, but people have forgotten these arts. The importance of protecting Cows is therefore stressed by Krishna in Bhagavad-gita (krisi-go-raksha-vanijyam vaisya-karma svabhavajam [Bg. 18.44]). Even now in the Indian villages surrounding Vrindavana, the villagers live happily simply by giving protection to the Cow. They keep Cow dung very carefully and dry it to use as fuel. They keep a sufficient stock of grains, and because of giving protection to the Cows, they have sufficient milk and milk products to solve all economic problems. Simply by giving protection to the Cow, the

villagers live so peacefully. Even the urine and stool of Cows have medicinal value. SB 10.6.19

The child was thoroughly washed with Cow urine and then smeared with the dust raised by the movements of the Cows. Then different names of the Lord were applied with Cow dung on twelve different parts of His body, beginning with the forehead, as done in applying tilaka. In this way, the child was given protection. SB 10.6.20

Even in the houses of the cultivators, who were not very advanced in the modern ways of civilization, the ladies used to know how to chant mantras to give protection to children with the help of Cow dung and Cow urine. This was a simple and practical way to give the greatest protection from the greatest dangers. People should know how to do this, for this is a part of Vedic civilization. SB 10.6.22-23 purport

Srila Rupa Goswami cites one example to show the depth of Sri Radhika's mercy towards the Cows, "Seeing a calf with its mouth pierced by a sharp grass, Sri Radhika felt very unhappy. With tears in Her eyes Radhika immediately dressed the calf's wound with red kunkuma (a mixture of saffron and turmeric) (Ujjvala Nilamani)

The duty of every leader

Once when the great King, Maharaj Parikshit was traveling, he saw a cruel man hurting the legs of a cow and a bull. The King at once caught hold of him to punish him suitably, since in Vedic culture it was considered a great offence to kill or even hurt a cow or bull. As the ideal head of the state, King Parikshit was aware of the importance of protecting cows.

The Tragedy of the Modern Age

The cruel man above is representative of the mentality of the people of the current age, i.e. Kali Yuga, where cow-slaughter has become common, even in India, where the cow was revered as "MOTHER" till some time ago.

The above story of Maharaja Parikshit was being narrated by the great devotee, Suta Goswami, to many sages assembled at a holy place called Naimisaranya over 5000 years ago. This was a little before this age of Kali began. These sages could not believe that in the coming days of Kali Yuga people would kill cows. The idea was so shocking to them. What would these great sages say today if they saw that the very leaders who are supposed to protect cows, like Maharaja Parikshit did, are instead opening organized slaughter houses for killing cows?

Our Responsibility

Human society must, therefore, maintain these two animals cow and bull carefully. But, unfortunately, both are being slaughtered in large numbers, in India itself it is 60,000 per day and in U.S. on weekends it is 1, 59,500 according to recent statistics. These greatly sinful acts are responsible for so many troubles in present society. To kill cows means to end human civilization. People do not know what harm they are doing in the name of economic development. They do not realize that only by seeing that bulls and cows are happy in all respects, human society can be happy. This is a FACT by the LAWS OF NATURE.

We Need Your Support

Protection of cows and bulls is possible only when cultured and pious minded citizens come forward to actively support the cause by their words, actions and wealth. It is the responsibility of every one of us

May God help us through this journey and he help us to reach on destination.

I would like to thank you all for your unconditional support in this journey and I hope that the same will remain in place for me in future.

Thank you,

Mahant Reema Giri Ji

(Adhishtatri Sanchalika)

SPIRITUAL IMPERATIVE

Elegant simplicity is the way to discover spirituality.

MATTER AND SPIRIT are two sides of the same coin. What we measure is matter; what we feel is spirit. Matter represents quantity; spirit is about quality. Spirit manifests itself through matter; matter comes to life through spirit. Spirit brings meaning to matter; matter gives form to spirit. Without spirit matter lacks life. We are human body and human spirit at the same time. A tree too has body and spirit; even rocks which appear to be dead contain their spirit. There is no dichotomy, no dualism, no separation between matter and spirit.

The problem is not matter but materialism. Similarly there is no problem with spirit, but spiritualism is problematic. The moment we encapsulate an idea or a thought into an 'ism' we lay the foundations of dualistic thought. The universe is uni-verse, one song, one poem, one verse. It contains infinite forms which dance together in harmony, sing

together in concert, balance each other in gravity, transform each other in evolution and yet the universe maintains its wholeness and its implicate order. Dark and light, above and below, left and right, words and meaning, matter and spirit complement each other, comfortable in mutual embrace. Where is the contradiction? Where is the conflict?

Life feeds life, matter feeds matter, spirit feeds spirit. Life feeds matter, matter feeds life and spirit feeds both matter and life. There is total reciprocity. This is the oriental worldview, an ancient worldview, a worldview found in the tribal traditions of pre-industrial cultures where nature and spirit, Earth and heaven, sun and moon are in eternal reciprocity and harmony.

Modern dualistic cultures see nature red in tooth and claw, the strongest and fittest surviving, the weak and meek disappearing, conflict and competition as the only true reality. From this worldview emerges the notion of a split between mind and matter. Once mind and matter are split then debate ensues as to whether mind is superior to matter or matter is superior to mind.

This worldview of split, rift, conflict, competition, separation and dualism has also given birth to the idea of separation between the human world and the natural world. Once that separation is established, humans consider themselves to be the superior species, engaged in controlling and manipulating nature for their use. In this view of the world, nature exists for human benefit, to be owned and possessed, and if nature is protected

and conserved then the purpose is only for human benefit. The natural world - plants, animals, rivers, oceans, mountains and the skies - is denuded of spirit. If spirit exists at all, then it is limited to human spirit. But even that is doubtful. In this worldview humans too are considered to be nothing more than a formation of material, molecules, genes and elements. Mind is considered to be a function of the brain, and the brain is an organ in the head and no more.

Spirit In Business

This notion of spiritless existence can be described as materialism. All is matter; land, forests, food, water, labour, literature and art are commodities to be bought and sold in the marketplace - the world market, the stockmarket, the so-called free market. This is a market of competitive advantage, a cut-throat market, a market where survival of the fittest is the greatest imperative: the strong competing with the weak and winning the biggest share of the market for themselves. Monopolies are established in the name of free competition. Five supermarket chains control eighty per cent of food sold in the UK. Four or five giant multinational corporations, such as Monsanto and Cargill, control eighty per cent of international food trade. Small and family farms cannot compete with the big players and are forced to retreat. This is the world where spirit has been driven out. Business without spirit, trade without compassion, industry without ecology, finance without fairness, economics without equity can only bring the breakdown of society and

destruction of the natural world. Only when spirit and business work together can humanity find coherent purpose.

Spirit In Politics

Just as materialism rules economics it also rules politics. Instead of seeing nations, regions and cultures of the world as one human community, the world is seen as a battlefield of nations competing with each other for power, influence and control over minds, markets and natural resources. One nation's interest is seen in opposition to the national interest of another. Indian national interest is opposed to Pakistani national interest. Palestinian national interest and Israeli national interest; American national interest and Iraqi national interest; Chechen national interest and Russian national interest, and so on...the list is long. And so we have polarized politics: "If you are not with us you are against us," has become the dominant mind-set. And if you are not with us you are not only against us, you are part of the axis of evil.

This is politics denuded of spirit. What can we expect from such politics other than rivalry, strife, the arms race, terrorism and wars? Politicians speak of democracy and freedom but they pursue the path of hegemony and self-interest. How can a particular view of democracy and freedom suit the whole world? There can be no democracy and freedom without compassion, reverence and respect for diversity, difference and pluralism. Compassion, reverence and respect are spiritual qualities - but politics

founded on materialism considers the values of the spirit to be woolly, flaky, utopian, idealistic, unrealistic and irrational. But where has the politics of power, control and self interest led us? The First World War, the Second World War, the cold war, the Vietnam war, the war in Kashmir, the war in Iraq, the attack on the Twin Towers of New York. Again the list is very long. Politics without spirituality has proved to be a grand failure and, therefore, it is time to bring politics and spirituality together again.

Spirit in Religion

Sometimes the words spirituality and religion are confused, but spirituality and religion are not the same thing. Politics should be free from the constraints of religion but should not be free of spiritual values. The word religion comes from the Latin root religio which means to bind together with the string of certain beliefs. A group of people come together, share a belief system, stick together and support each other. Thus religion binds you, whereas the root meaning of spirit is associated with breath, with air. We can all be free spirits and breathe freely. Spirituality transcends beliefs. The spirit moves, inspires, touches our hearts and refreshes our souls.

When a room has been left closed, doors and windows shut and curtains drawn, the air in the room becomes stale. When we enter the room after a few days we find it stuffy so we open the doors and windows to bring in fresh air. In the same way, when minds are closed for too long we need a radical avatar, a prophet, to open the windows so that our

stuffy minds and stale thoughts are aired again. A Buddha, a Jesus, a Gandhi, a Mother Teresa, a Rumi, a Hildegard of Bingen appears and blows away the cobwebs of closed minds. Of course we don't need to wait for such prophets: we can be our own prophets, unlock our own hearts and minds and allow the fresh air of compassion, of generosity, of divinity, of sacredness to blow through our lives.

Religious groups and traditions have an important role to play. They initiate us into a discipline of thought and practice; they provide us with a framework; they offer us a sense of community, of solidarity, of support. A tender seedling needs a pot and a stick to support it in the early stages of its development, or even the enclosure of a nursery to protect it from frost and cold winds. But when it is strong enough it needs to be planted out in the open so that it is able to develop its own roots and become a fully mature tree. Likewise religious orders act as nurseries for seeking souls. But in the end we each have to establish our own roots and find divinity in our own way.

There are many good religions, many good philosophies and many good traditions. We should accept all of them and accept that different religious traditions meet the need of different people at different times, in different places and in different contexts. This spirit of generosity, inclusivity and recognition is a spiritual quality. Whenever religious orders lose this quality, they become no more than mere sects protecting their vested interests.

At present the institutionalized religions have fallen into this trap. For them the maintenance of institutions has become more important than helping their members to grow, to develop and to discover their own free spirit. When religious orders get caught in maintaining their properties and their reputation they lose their spirituality and then they, too, become like a business without spirit. As it is necessary to restore spirit in business and in politics we also need to restore spirit in religion. This may seem a strange proposition because the very *raison d'être* of every religion is to seek spirit and to establish universal love. The reality is otherwise. Religions have done much good but also they have done much harm, and we can see all around us that tensions between Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jews are major causes of conflicts, wars and disharmony.

The rivalry among religions would cease if they realized that religious faiths are like rivers flowing into the same great ocean of spirituality. Even though the various rivers with their different names give nourishment to different regions and different peoples, they all provide the same quality of refreshment. There is no conflict among the rivers. Why then should there be conflict among the religions? Their theology or belief system may differ but the spirituality is the same. It is this spirituality which is paramount. Respect for a diversity of beliefs is a spiritual imperative.

Spirituality and Social Change

As business, politics and religious institutions need to return to their spiritual roots, so do the environmental and social justice movements need to embrace a spiritual dimension. At present most social change movements concentrate on negative campaigning. They present doom and gloom scenarios and become mirror images of the institutions they criticize.

The real impetus for ecological sustainability and social justice stems from ethical, aesthetic and spiritual visions. But this focus gets lost when campaigners get caught in false goals such as their desire to attract media attention or their need to gain more members for their organizations. These concerns become ends in themselves and the presentation of a holistic, inclusive and constructive vision is forgotten. Love of nature and the intrinsic value of all life, human as well as other than human, is the essential ground in which environmental and social justice movements need to be rooted. The basis of all campaigning is reverence for life, and this is a spiritual basis. There is no contradiction between pragmatic campaigning and a spiritual overview. Mahatma Gandhi's political programme was founded upon spiritual values. Martin Luther King's Civil Rights Movement was rooted in a spiritual vision. Contemporary environmental and social justice movements also require that broad worldview rather than be limited to the science of ecology and the social sciences.

Spirituality and Science

Often it is believed that science and spirituality are like oil and water: they cannot mix. This is a mistaken notion. Science needs spirituality and spirituality needs science.

When science forsakes the restraints of moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions and strives to achieve everything that is achievable, experimenting with everything irrespective of consequences, then science leads to the technologies of nuclear weapons, genetic engineering, human and animal cloning and poisonous products which pollute soil, water and air. It is dangerous to give science carte blanche to dominate human minds and to subjugate the natural world. Contemporary science has acquired such status of superiority that it is presently commanding the total adherence of industry, business, education and politics. Some of its experiments have become so crude and cruel that it reaches beyond the constraints of civilization. Ethical, moral and spiritual values are essential to moderate the power of science.

As science needs spirituality, spirituality also needs science. Without a certain amount of rational, analytical and intellectual skills spirituality can easily turn into sectarian and selfish pursuit. I was a monk for nine years, pursuing my own purification and salvation. I saw the world as a trap and spirituality as a way of liberation from the world. Then I came across the writings of Mahatma Gandhi. He said that there is no dualism between the world and the spirit. Spirituality is not just for saints. It is not confined to monastic orders or caves in the mountains. Spirituality is in everyday life, from the growing of food to cooking, eating, washing up, sweeping the floor, building the house, making clothes

and caring for neighbors. We must bring spirituality into all parts of our lives: into politics, into business, into agriculture and into education. And we must do so with a scientific approach.

That was such an inspiring insight that I decided to leave the monastic order and return to the world of everyday life.

Meeting Spiritual Needs

We human beings have our bodily needs and also our spiritual needs. Food, water, shelter, warmth, work, education and health are our essential needs. We need to engage in economic activities to fulfill these needs. But once these needs are met we need to find a sense of contentment and satisfaction in order to be happy and fulfilled. We need the wisdom to know when enough is enough. If we go on with economic activities even after our essential needs are met, then we become victims of greed and desires. Many of our social, political and environmental crises are crises of desire.

Those who profit from endless economic activities put enormous effort into persuading us that by having more material goods we shall be happy. But happiness does not come from material things alone; we also have social and spiritual needs: the need for community, for love, for friendship, for beauty, for art and music. We need to use our imagination and our creativity. We need the opportunity to make things with our own hands. We need time to be still and contemplate; we need spaces to appreciate and

enjoy. These spiritual needs cannot be met by turning ourselves into consumers of goods provided by companies who make vast profits at the cost of the environment and ethics and at the expense of future generations. Materialism has become their new religion and they want everyone to be converted to it and become loyal members of their faith.

This religion of materialism is obviously unsustainable. If the six billion citizens of the world were to live the lifestyle of Western consumers and use the energy provided by fossil fuels we would need five planets, but we haven't got five planets: we have only one planet. Therefore, we need to invent a lifestyle of elegant simplicity where Earth's gifts are shared among all human beings fairly, without compromising the needs of the more than human world as well as of future generations. Such elegant simplicity is the way to discover spirituality. We embrace simplicity not only because the consumerist lifestyle is unfair, unjust and unsustainable but also because it is the cause of discontent, dissatisfaction, disharmony, depression, disease and division. Even if there were no problem of global warming, of resource shortage, of pollution and waste we would still need to choose a more simple lifestyle which is conducive to and congruent with spirituality, because a simple lifestyle, a lifestyle uncluttered with the burden of unnecessary possessions, is the lifestyle which can offer the opportunity to explore the universe of the imagination and to find boundless joy in that universe.

The Buddha was a prince; he possessed palaces, elephants, horses, land and treasures of gold and silver but he realized that all his wealth was holding him back, that wealth was keeping him chained to greed, desire, craving, pride, ego, fear and anger. The idea that wealth and power would make him happy was an illusion; joy through material possessions was a mirage. So he embraced a life of noble poverty which meant voluntary acceptance of limits. There was no population explosion at that time, the Buddha faced no shortage of raw materials or natural resources, there was no problem of global warming and yet he preferred the path of spirituality and simplicity because that was the way to meet the needs of the soul as well as the body.

Spirituality and Civilization

My land, my house, my possessions, my power, my wealth are the cravings of small minds. Spirituality frees us from small mind and liberates us from the small I, the ego identity. Through spirituality we are able to open the doors of big mind and big heart where sharing, caring and compassion are the true realities. Life exists only through the gift of other lives: all life is interdependent. Existence is an intricately interconnected web of relationships. We share the breath of life and thus we are connected. Whether we are rich or poor, black or white, young or old, humans or animals, fish or fowl, trees or rocks, everything is sustained by the same air, the same sunshine, the same water, the same soil. There are no boundaries, no borders, no separation, no division, no duality; it is all the dance of eternal life where spirit and matter dance together. Day and

night, Earth and heaven all dance together, and wherever there is dance, there is joy and beauty.

The religion of materialism and the culture of consumerism which have been promoted by Western civilization have blocked the flow of joy and beauty. Once, Mahatma Gandhi was asked, "Mr. Gandhi, what do you think of Western civilization?" He replied, "It would be a good idea." Yes, it would be a good idea because any society discarding spiritual values and fighting for material goods, going to war to control oil, producing nuclear weapons to maintain its political power cannot be called a civilization. The modern, consumerist culture built on unfair, unjust and unsustainable economic institutions cannot be considered to be civilized. The true mark of civilization is to maintain a balance between material progress and spiritual integrity. How can we consider ourselves to be civilized when we don't know how to live with each other in harmony and how to live on the Earth without destroying it? We have developed technologies to reach the moon but not the wisdom to live with our neighbors, nor mechanisms to share food and water with our fellow human beings. A civilization without a spiritual foundation is no civilization at all.

The way we treat animals is a clear example of our lack of civilization. Cows, pigs and chickens live as prisoners in factory farms. Mice, monkeys and rabbits are treated as slaves as if they felt no pain; all for human greed and human arrogance. Western civilization seems to believe that all life is expendable in the service of human desire.

Racism, nationalism, sexism and ageism have been challenged and to some extent eradicated, but humanism still rules our minds. As a result we consider the human species to be superior to all other species. This humanism is a kind of specialism. If we are to strive for civilization we will have to change our philosophy, our worldview and our behavior. We will have to enter into a new paradigm where all beings are inter-beings, interdependent, interrelated and interspecies.

Spirituality Begins at Home

Where do we begin this spiritual revolution? We begin with ourselves. Self-transformation is the first step towards social, political and religious transformation. All transformations start at the bottom and move upwards to embrace the larger world. That is the law of the natural world. The great and mighty oak begins with the sowing of an acorn in the soil. After the seed is sown, for a few weeks or months no-one knows whether that acorn is living or dead or whether it will ever emerge into the world. But that unseen transformation under the earth's surface enables the acorn to emerge out of the soil as a tiny tender shoot. It is still small and insignificant but only from that insignificant beginning starts the process which eventually results in the mighty oak tree.

My mother used to say, "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness, but before you can light other candles you need to light your own candle. Be your own light. Then

you can offer yourself to help others. How can you make someone else happy if you yourself are not happy? But your happiness is born of your kindness to others."

So personal, social and political transformation go together because when we are free from fear and anxiety and at ease with ourselves then we are able to engage with the community around us and with society at large to bring about social and political changes to improve the lives of all. That selfless act of altruism in turn brings us a greater sense of fulfillment, satisfaction and happiness. Thus personal and political interact.

Three Practical Steps Towards Spirituality

Trust

So let us explore a few areas of spirituality. First and foremost among them is removal of fear and cultivation of trust. If we look deeply we will realize that many of our psychological difficulties stem from fear. A sense of insecurity, the ambition to be successful, the desire to prove ourselves, efforts to impress others, craving for power over others and to be in control, addiction to shopping, consuming and possessing, all are ultimately related to fear. This personal fear expands into social insecurity and political insecurity. So the first step towards spiritual renewal is to look at the phenomenon of fear in our lives and realize that much of this fear is aggravated by more fear. Fear breeds fear and fear is led by fear. We go to great lengths to build

psychological and physical defenses but they only increase our fear. Even when we have nuclear weapons to protect us we are not free from fear.

Moreover, history has proved that nuclear weapons are no defense and bring no security. The attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York proved that ultimately all defenses are futile. The attackers can attack with a knife or a razor blade, so where is the justification for spending so much effort, time and resources in building nuclear warheads when they bring no defense and no security? The most powerful country in the world, the USA, is also the most insecure country in the world. Paradoxically the more defenses we build the more insecure we are. Western societies seem to be obsessed with safety and security and go to great lengths to insure themselves against all eventualities. Such obsession has a paralyzing effect.

The first step into the spiritual sphere is to understand fear and cultivate trust. Trust yourself. You are as good as you are. You embody the divine spark, the creative impulse, the power of imagination which will always be with you and will protect you. Trust others: they are in the same boat as you. They long for love as much as you do. Only in relationships with others will you blossom. You are because others are and others are because you are. We all exist, flourish, blossom and mature in this mutuality, reciprocity and unity. Give love and love will be reciprocated. Give fear and fear will be reciprocated. So one seed of thistle and you will get hundreds of thorny thistles. So one

seed of camellia and you will get hundreds of camellia flowers. You will reap what you sow; this is the old wisdom. And yet we have not learnt it.

Then trust the process of the universe. The sun is there to nourish all life. Water is there to quench the thirst. The soil is there to grow food. Trees are there to bear fruit. The moment a baby is born the mother's breast is filled with milk. The process of the universe is embedded in the life-support system of mutuality. Hundreds of millions of species - lions, elephants, snakes, butterflies - all are fed, watered, sheltered and taken care of by the mysterious process of the universe; trust it. As Julian of Norwich said, "All shall be well, all manner of things shall be well."

Participation

The second spiritual quality is participation. Participate in the magical process of life. Life is a miracle: we cannot explain it; nor can we know it in full, but we can actively and consciously participate in it without trying to control it, manipulate it and subjugate it.

Participation is easy and simple. We have been given two wonderful hands to cultivate the soil and grow our food. Working with the soil in the garden meets the need of the body as much as the need of the mind. Industrial farming has taken away our birthright to participate in the cultivation of food. Large-scale mechanized and industrialized farming is born of our desire to dominate. Small-scale, natural, local farming - still better, gardening - is a way of participating with the rhythms of the seasons. England should be

gardened, not farmed. Animals should be freed from the prisons of factory farms. Growing food is one example of the principle of participation. Baking bread, cooking food, sharing the meal with family, friends and guests are as much spiritual activities as they are social and economic activities. The culture of fast food has deprived us of the fundamental activity of participation in the daily ritual and practice of physical and spiritual nourishment. It is wonderful that people all over Europe are inspired by the Italian movement of Slow Food. Slow Food is spiritual food. Fast food is fearful food.

Slowness is a spiritual quality. If we wish to restore our spirituality we have to slow down. Paradoxically only when we go slower can we go further. Doing less, consuming less, producing less will enable us to be more, to celebrate more, and to enjoy more. Time is what makes things perfect. Give yourself time to make things and give yourself time to rest. Take your time to do as well as to be. It is in the dance of doing and being that spirituality is to be found.

Once, the Emperor of Persia asked his Sufi Master, "Please advise me: what should I be doing to renew my soul, revive my spirit, and refresh my mind so that I can be happy in myself and effective in my work?" The Sufi Master replied, "My Lord, sleep as long as you can!" The Emperor was surprised and amazed to hear this answer and said, "Sleep? I have little time to sleep. I have justice to perform, laws to enact, ambassadors to receive and armies to command. How can I sleep when I have so much to do?" The Sufi Master replied, "My Lord, the longer you sleep, the less you will oppress!" The

Emperor was speechless: he saw the point of the Sufi sage. Even though the sage was blunt, he was right.

Western countries are in a similar position to the Emperor of Persia. The longer we work, the more we consume: we drive cars, fly in planes, burn electricity, go shopping and produce waste. The faster we do these activities, the more damage we inflict on the environment, on the poor and on our own peace of mind. So true participation is to live and work in harmony with ourselves, with our fellow human beings and with the natural world. Participation is not about speed and efficiency; rather it is about harmony, balance and appropriateness of action.

Gratitude

The third spiritual quality is a sense of gratitude. In our Western culture we complain about everything. If it is raining then we say, "Isn't it awful weather? So wet and cold!" When it is sunny we complain, "Isn't it hot? So hot!" The media are full of complaints and criticism. Debates in the parliament are mostly concentrated on the negative aspects of government policies. The opposition blames the government and the government complains about the opposition. The national culture of blaming and complaining permeates throughout, even in our family life and in our workplace. Because of the dominance of a culture of condemnation we learn to condemn ourselves too. "I am not good enough," is a widespread feeling. Whatever we do we don't

appreciate it. We think we should be doing something different, something else, something better. Then whatever other people do we don't learn to appreciate it either. "I had a terrible childhood," we complain. "My school was awful," we reflect. "I'm never appreciated by my colleagues," we grumble, and this kind of criticism goes on and on.

In order to develop spiritually we need to balance our critical faculty with the faculty of appreciation and gratitude. We need to train ourselves to turn our minds to recognize the gifts we have received from our ancestors, our parents, our teachers, our colleagues and our society in general. We also need to express our thankfulness for the gifts of the Earth. What a wonderful Gaian system it is, that we are part of! It regulates climate, it organizes the seasons and it provides abundance of nourishment, beauty and sensual pleasure to all creatures. When we are in awe and wonder at the workings of the sacred Earth we can feel nothing but blessed and grateful. When food is served we are filled with a sense of gratitude. We thank the cook and the gardener but also we thank the soil and the rain and the sunshine. We even express our gratitude to the earthworms who have been working day and night to keep the soil friable and fertile. However green a gardener's fingers are, without the worms there will be no food. So in praise we say, "Long live the worms," and further we join the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins and say, "Long live the wet and the wilderness yet." It is the beauty of the wild which feeds our soul while the fruit of the Earth feeds the body.

The generosity and unconditional love of the Earth for all its creatures is boundless. We plant one small seed of an apple in the ground. That tiny seed results in a tree within a few years and produces thousands and thousands of apples year after year. And all that from a tiny pip, sometimes self-sown. When in the autumn apples ripen with their fragrant, juicy, crisp flesh we eat to our hearts' content. The tree knows no discrimination; it asks no questions. Poor or rich, saint or sinner, fool or philosopher, wasp or bird, one and all can receive the fruit freely. What else can we feel for the tree but gratitude? And from our gratitude flows humility, as arrogance comes from complaining and criticism. When we are critical of nature we come to the conclusion that nature is not good enough: it is imperfect and unreliable. Nature needs our technology and engineering so we go to great lengths to improve on it, but we end up destroying it. With a sense of gratitude we go with the grain of nature, we work in harmony with it and we appreciate its miraculous qualities.

TO SUMMARISE, the point I am making is that there is no dualism and separation between matter and spirit. Spirit is held within matter and matter within spirit but we have separated them and have made spirit a private matter and have allowed matter alone to dominate our public life. We need to heal this rift urgently. Without such healing, the material world, the Earth itself will continue to suffer catastrophic consequences, and spiritual insights and wisdom will continue to be seen as idealistic, esoteric and otherworldly practices totally irrelevant to our everyday existence.

When we are able to heal this rift we will be able to instil spirit in business, in commerce and in the economy. We will be able to create a politics which works for all. Our religions will not be divisive; on the contrary they will become a source of healing and resolving conflicts. The movement for environmental sustainability and social justice will inspire rather than agitate and, personally, human beings will be at ease with themselves and with the world around them. The marriage of matter and spirit, of business and spirit, of politics and spirit, of religion and spirit and of activism and spirit is the greatest union required in our time.

People are hungry for spiritual nourishment; this hunger cannot be satisfied by material means. Therefore, the great work we have in our hands is to create space and time for people to discover their spirituality as well as the spirituality of others.

It should not be necessary for me to make a case for spiritual space but because in the last few hundred years Western culture has been in denial of spirit and has been busy elevating the status of matter, our society and culture have lost their balance and wholeness. In order to restore this balance I have emphasized the importance of spirit. In an ideal world people would recognize that spirit is always implicit in matter. Traditionally that is how it was. People took pilgrimages to holy mountains and sacred rivers; life was considered sacred and inviolable. We recognized the metaphysical dimension of trees. The speaking tree, the tree of knowledge and the tree of life express

the implicit spiritual quality of the tree. Regaining this perennial wisdom is life's greatest imperative.

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

Guru Kripa Adhyatmik Chetna Sansthan located in rural surrounding the place is Dhandhera in the State of Uttaranchal (INDIA).

This initiative is functioning as a 'not for profit' model. The aim is to emulate and replicate this model to other parts of the country particularly in the economically back ward states and in turn help the Government to implement its Social responsibility in the real sense of the term.

The concept of this type can very well be applied to this model. The facility is geared up to handle and support all national social responsibilities.

CONSTITUTION

A Society Registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860.

REGISTERED OFFICE

Bhawani Shankar Ashram, Colonel Enclave,
Dhandhera, Roorkee-247667, Distt.:- Haridwar,UTTARAKHAND

OTHER REGISTRATIONS

Society is registered under section 12A and 80G of Income Tax Act, 1961.

THE MISSION OF THE UNIT

“To provide quality products accessible and affordable to all round the clock”.

OBJECTIVE

1. To ensure availability of quality spiritual and welfare services accessible to all without any discrimination or bias.
2. To provide the availability of helping hand round the clock 24/7.
3. To enable access of the products to the community at an affordable price.
4. To run the facility in a transparent manner.
5. To act as a role model for others to emulate.

WORKS DONE IN LAST YEAR

Guru Kripa Adhyatmik Chetna Sansthan has done following activities in last year:-

1. Regulars Satsang in Ashram by society members and invited guests.
2. Special pooja on Shivratri
3. Bhandara and medical camp in Kanwar Season
4. Various Jhankees and other program on Shri Krishn Janmashtmi
5. Bhandara on Chhath
6. Marriage of Tulsi Shaligram according to hindu rituals
7. Shree-mad Bhagvat Katha
8. Holi Milan Program
9. Free marriage of a Poor Girl
10. Moorti Sthapna of Mahant Gulab Giri ji
11. Free eye checkup and treatment camp
12. Hanuman Jayanti Program