



RETURN BACK TO THE
WEBSITE

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ORIENTATION

Welcome To Shaktiyogashrama

THE VISION

Here is a story that illustrates our approach :

Shiva tirtha was a humble weaver earning his livelihood through the hereditary skill.

Rich in faith, he nevertheless lacked the wherewithal to make ends meet.

Of late, a persistent dream occurred to him- that he should travel to the foot of the Gir Mountains and there find a huge Banyan tree near a cobbler's cottage. Hidden, near that tree, lay a treasure which would put an end to all his miseries. Shivatirtha could ill afford the long journey, but the message of the dream was compelling.

Finally, one day he set out in search of the treasure. There, sprawled under the Banyan tree of his dreams laid Kamakoti, the village cobbler chewing pan and spitting its bloody remains between peals of irreverential laughter, at the sight of pilgrims trudging up and down the mountain.

Shivatirtha patiently sat under the tree hoping to get an opportunity to find that treasure, but Kamakoti showed no signs of giving him the privacy to do so. This stranger in turn, intrigued Kamakoti. He had seen anxious pilgrims, eager to earn religious merit, hurry up and down the slopes of the mountains. But a pilgrim such as Shivatirtha he had never seen. Unable to contain his curiosity, he asked Shivatirtha, the purpose of his visit. Shivatirtha narrated his dream with simple faith and firm conviction.

It touched even a cynic like Kamakoti. 'O, you poor, uneducated fool.' sighed Kamakoti, 'even age has not wisened you. Why if I had been as guillible as you, this very moment, I would be travelling south to Tanjavur in search of a poor weaver named Shivatirtha, for in his hut, under the fire place, is buried a treasure!' "Shivatirtha,' he scoffed,' half the men in that village are called by that name. Imagine wearing out my soles in search of that particular Shivatirtha who sits on my treasure!'

Wonder struck, Shivatirtha listened and sat thoughtfully in silence. In deep reverence he bowed to Kamakoti and hastened back home. Patiently he dug the ground under his home fire to find the treasure that put an end to all his miseries.

*You too must go away, to come back; lose yourself, to find yourself;
renounce, to truly enjoy; retreat, to return to your Self.*



RETURN BACK TO THE
WEBSITE

www.shaktiyogashrama.com



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An Orientation To The Shaktiyogashrama Residential Retreats

THE VISION

The Shaktiyogashrama residential retreats are meant to “Begin this Journey within”

*If you must grow,
Then just flow,
Let go.
So.*

These residential programmes are an abbreviated model of Swami Shri Harish Madhukar’s vision of education. Conceived in the ashram gurukul mode, they are meant to actualize the following values of Shaktiyogashrama: -

**Education is a process of de-conditioning. Subjects and syllabi are only means to this end.*

**Education must be holistic and equally discipline the mind-body complex.*

**Education, while being progressive must provide cultural rootedness, or else it will only disorient the individual.*

**Education must include a spiritual discipline that will awaken and harness unlimited reservoirs of Power within each individual.*

The Shaktiyogashrama programmes are an integration of arts, sciences, spirituality and life styles in order to create a whole human being integrated with himself, on the inside and outside. These values are illustrated through modules on yoga and meditation, classical Indian Dance & Music, mythology, environmental sciences & natural holistic life styles. These modules are an overt expression of Swamiji’s intrinsic philosophy of education.

What the ashram also wants to communicate through the ashram-gurukul experience is Swami Shri Harish Madhukar’s message of Ananda yoga.

ANANDA SADHANA | The Yoga Of Integrated Happiness

The search of human life is happiness. But the search must be in the right direction or else we will reach where we should not. Yoga shows the way to long- term, harmonising happiness, happiness without side effects, happiness without violence to oneself or others; a win- win situation of peace, joy, and bounty.

But we have to redefine happiness. Happiness is not momentary pleasure, joy is not fun, discipline is not mechanical, forced doing, and peace is not an absence of activity and emotions...Ananda sadhana is the golden truth between many such opposites. Ananda sadhana is about an integrating of opposites.

As things stand, intellectual understanding does not translate into practice, life experience is still born because it is unawares and not rightly understood. Caught between pleasure and pain, sometimes,



momentary happiness is stumbled upon. The result is confusion and negativity.

The real problem is the lack of integration or yoga within us. Mind, body, emotions are at loggerheads with each other and while the ego reigns supreme, the light of the Self is veiled. How can a fragmented person find happiness?

The only solution to this problem lies in the practice of yoga.

If there is one value that Indian culture exhorts again and again, it is that of integration or yoga. Many forms of yoga or union and integration are desired-

- *the union of mind, body and intellect
- *the union of Man with Nature
- *the union of Man with Man
- *the union of Man with God, or the higher energies

A study of yoga includes not only the practice of some intricate bodily postures, or meditation techniques, but also deep thinking on one's attitudes, preferences and prejudices, and all psychological dependence that obstructs happiness. Deep meditation alone can help one to dissolve negativity, become still, develop sensitivity and expand consciousness. This is the royal road to happiness.

In keeping with Babaji's emphasis on inner, and not outer growth, on conscious understanding and awareness, and not on subjects and syllabi; it is the covert factors at these programmes that provide the real the key to this Integrated Yoga of happiness.

These hidden catalysts are :

- *Living and learning from nature*
- *Simplicity*
- *Inner discipline or the practice of awareness*

Learning From Nature's Book

At the ashram, Nature is the prime teacher. Can any book or subject teach us the valuable lessons that Nature does? The sylvan surroundings of the ashram are highly conducive to imbibing from Nature and observing the natural laws of the Universe to which we are all subject and must abide by, for true happiness.

At the ashram programmes, the participants are encouraged to deeply ponder on and tune in to, the workings of Nature, so as to emulate and actualize these principles in their lives.

Here are some Truths from Nature that can go a long way in 'sorting out' our lives -

- * Nature is non competitive. The tendency to compare is the root of human woes.
- * In Nature, in its vegetation & wild life, there is supreme acceptance of whatever is.
- * Human life is however marred by complaining, blaming, justifying and brooding.



- * In Nature, there is an absence of any 'need' to be loved, understood, and appreciated.
- * In Nature, there is an Absence of any 'need' to impress or be impressed
- * In Nature, there is dispassion and non judgement.
- * Nature is always in the 'NOW', ever fresh, ever new, free of brooding of a stale past or hallucinating of an imaginary future.
- * In Nature, there is patience and stillness - a lack of hurriedness and restlessness.
- * Nature lives in tune and in rhythm with the seasons and cycles of Life.
- * In Nature, there is rootedness.
- * Nature lives in a state of surrender and flow unfettered by psychological inhibitions and conditionings.
- * In Nature there is an absence of greed for 'more'.
- * In Nature, there is an absence of sentiment that comes from 'me' and 'mine'
- * In Nature there is a farsighted intelligence. Our attachment makes us shortsighted.
- * In Nature are the lessons in perfection. Every blade of grass, every flower, bird and animal is perfect; nothing is slipshod or half done. In this very perfection is the outline of a work ethics.
- * Nature embodies the principles of high art - perfection without self-consciousness.
- * In Nature there is a 'letting go' of time and space and forms with ease and without resistance and violence.
- * In Nature we learn the art of 'being' without hankering for 'becoming'

It is difficult to remain arrogant in front of Nature's grand design. In Nature alone can one see unconditional, choice less, living in the moment, without any interference from the ego and without an overuse of the mind. In Nature is the value of ceaseless, selfless work. This is the secret of its perfection, bounty, joy and beauty.

All human problems can dissolve in light of Nature's intelligence.

The gods and goddesses of Indian culture are also only forms or symbols of that Intelligence operating at all times in Nature. At Shaktiyogashram there is no insistence on worship of any personal God. Worship the God within and the God without in Nature.

Living In Simplicity

The chief barrier to evolution is laziness and lethargy that comes from luxurious, unnatural, slothful life styles. Simplicity of body and mind is of prime importance for evolution.

Why is simplicity essential?

Simplicity for plain living and high thinking.

The Spartan look and feel of the ashram is deliberate and conscious because high thinking can only co-exist with plain living. Simplicity is essential not to mortify and torture the flesh but to free energies for higher purposes. Do you want to travel lightly through life, does the baggage hamper you?



RETURN BACK TO THE
WEBSITE

www.shaktiyogashrama.com



SHAKTI
YOGASHRAMA
GURUKULAM

Shaktiyogashrama is a place to begin that enquiry.

Simplicity for toughness and strength of character

In simplicity and austerity alone can strength of character emerge.

A life of excessive comforts and luxuries can only create slothful, lazy bodies. When bodies are lazy, minds will be slothful, sentimental, selfish, and insensitive, resisting all change and enquiry. What happiness can such beings find?

Simplicity so as to travel lightly through life

No Integration is possible without uncluttered living

Far greater than the weight of any material comforts is the ponderousness of psychological or intellectual 'baggage'.

The ashram is a place to look squarely at the baggage of your preferences, prejudices and negative thinking. Feel free to leave that baggage at the ashram.

Simplicity, so as to discipline the senses

Are you afraid of discipline? Does the thought of discipline scare you, do you resist it, does it make you feel guilty and lose a sense of joy? Then you need to sit down and think deeply - what is it that you dislike about discipline. Is it because you are lazy, is it a resistance to change, is it because you hate to be told anything, is it because you lack patience, is it because you do not think about others...? The reasons could be many and varied but somewhere they have to do with laziness. A weak and lazy mind and body will dread discipline

The maximum queries that we have, are regarding the facilities offered at the ashram. Even the course content and the nature of the modules do not get as much importance as whether tea will be served at the ashram or not!

The answer to indiscipline is not in force and repression. That will only result in unhappiness. The question is why does physical discomfort frighten us so much? Why do our bodily needs traumatize us? An ashram is a place to observe yourself and find out why. There are no pat answers. An ashram is a place where a dialogue can be had on these things.

A gentle disciplining of the senses is hinted at in Shaktiyogashrama.

Discipline in eating-

No sense organ creates as much havoc as the tongue. Therefore eat less and talk less.

You are what you eat. Junk food is not allowed inside the ashram premises nor served. Junk food is plastic food, inert and lifeless. It will make the mind gross, insensitive and lazy. Living food that is fresh and even raw contains pranic energy ideal for developing strength and sensitivity. The participants are disciplined to eat at regular timings.

Discipline in speech



RETURN BACK TO THE
WEBSITE

www.shaktiyogashrama.com



SHAKTI
YOGASHRAMA
GURUKULAM

The participants are also urged to keep an attentive watch on that other activity of the tongue- speech. The practice of vani-sadhana or the discipline of speech is encouraged.

Can you spend the few days at the ashram avoiding all slanderous, negative speech, small talk and gossip, discussion of mundane, family or business matters? Can you avoid talking about matters related to the past or future?

At the ashram there are no rigid hours of silence. When one becomes totally aware of all that one speaks, automatically there is silence. What is encouraged is to be aware of every single word that passes your lips and to weigh its necessity, significance and consequence. If this exercise is consciously and relentlessly done, what will result is silence and a tremendous conservation of energy.

Simplicity so as to conserve

Living in simplicity is also to conserve the precious resources that Mother Nature has given us. If we waste callously and consume greedily, there will come a time when Nature's coffers will be empty and then we will be forced to live close to Nature.

Simplicity so as to be independent

There will be many things that you may feel deprived of at the ashram. Please look upon this as an opportunity to question your needs and reconsider your dependency on them. Spirituality is all about gaining material and psychological independence. Without this basic independence, how can that higher independence that we call liberation, be attained.

Simplicity of the mind

What is truly important is a simple mind. All austerity is to get that. A simple mind is one, which is not over-used, one that does not practice self-deception, one that is honest with itself and carries no psychological baggage of any form of negativity or complexes.

Simplicity so as to develop sensitivity

Sensitivity is sharpened Intelligence. With simplicity of body and mind comes sensitivity. A rich life will only make the body and thinking gross. Some of the fat and cholesterol that accumulates in your body also settles on the brain making it blunt and superficial.

Simplicity so as to retain skills

Loss of skills is a loss of intelligence.

Modern day comforts and luxuries have robbed man of many skills, especially hand- skills. The use of cars, gadgets, remote controls, and the dependence on domestics has robbed man of agility – physical and mental. With machines over taking our life, precious manual skills are lost. Even walking has become an effort and is avoided. With the loss of manual skills, the body, due to sheer disuse, becomes rusted and loses grace. No amount of cosmetics can give that. With the loss of skills and disuse of the body for day to day living, has come stress. And so we need expensive gyms and recreation classes.

Simplicity so as to develop patience

Gadgets and luxuries have made us impatient.

We are impatient if we have to wait for a bus, impatient if the food ordered does not arrive soon,



RETURN BACK TO THE
WEBSITE

www.shaktiyogashrama.com



SHAKTI
YOGASHRAMA
GURUKULAM

impatient if the lights go off. . . We are impatient with food we have to chew, peel and cut, impatient with clothes that we have to drape, co-ordinate and manage. Impatience robs you of stillness. An impatient, restless person can never find peace. Do you still want to hold onto your impatience? An ashram is a place to start that enquiry.

Simplicity for selfless living

Toughness and simplicity are essential to develop courage to live the spiritual values of renunciation, love, compassion and generosity- If one's own physical and psychological needs are very great, how can one give, share, understand or love?

Shaktiyogashrama is a place to begin a dialogue within yourself.

There are very few rules and regulations at Shaktiyogashrama because our guru believed that what good can outer discipline do without inner enquiry and awareness? These few days at Shaktiyogashrama are there for your deep inner enquiry and search. We are there for the dialogue but the search must be yours. The modules on classical arts are a formal way of leading you inwards because our classical arts and sciences talk of the same spiritual values. But you have to do the inner work continuously and relentlessly.

Inner Discipline

The thrust of Babaji, Swami Shri Harish Madhukar's teachings was not on ritualistic worship but on the deconditioning of the psyche and the practice of self-awareness. Thus ritualistic worship is minimal at Shaktiyogashrama. An air of informality pervades the ashram, which is often mistaken for indiscipline and lack of structuring. But the underlying message is that each one has to be aware of himself, and worship the Self-alone.

The aim of the ashram programmes is to create an 'ashramite'.

And eventually, the real ashram is that haven of poise; stillness and peace that is found within one's own integrated self. External ashrams are only to provide a space for that search, an outer model for that inner peace.

Here's wishing you a happy and exciting inward journey.

Shivoum.