

Welcome!

Dear Fellow Sadasyas,

Jai Maa. Welcome to the first issue of *The Hamsa*. This quarterly magazine is a *sevā* (selfless service) offering to aid in the *mananam* (contemplation) process of the Vedic method of education. We regularly sit with our teacher and engage in *shravanam*, deeply listening to the knowledge, and when we return to our home, we contemplate and mentally churn what we have heard so that we can apply the wisdom through *nidhyāsanam*.

Compiling this inaugural issue has been an uplifting process of revisiting, reorganizing, and sifting through the heap of gems shared since the program's official start at the Initiation ceremony in July. This effort has further strengthened my faith in the value of *mananam*. I see how this magazine can be an important support for all of us on this journey of Spiritual Vedic Education. If, by reading it, it serves to bring a piece of knowledge we have heard back to the forefront of our thoughts, or illustrates a practical way a fellow student is applying this wisdom in their life that we can do, too, or sparks a Sadasya to sit in quiet contemplation for a few moments to listen to the internal source of Truth echoing the same insights that have been heard in the words of the external teacher, then this magazine's purpose will have been met.

I encourage you to consider contributing your contemplative and analytical writings to this magazine as an exercise in personal *mananam* and also as a gift to the rest of your *Kula* (spiritual family). See the invitation at the end of the magazine for more information on how to be involved. Also, look for the next issue coming out in December.

Warm wishes to you as you deepen your personal relationship with these teachings.

Ishani Lauren Naidu
Editor

About the Title 'Hamsa'

Just as the swan (*Hamsa* in Sanskrit) lives on water, but its feathers are never wet, similarly, an *Advaita Vedāntin* (follower of Advaita Vedānta) dwells in the *Maya*-filled *Samsāra*, fulfilling all duties, but remains untouched and unpolluted by *Maya*. Such a one is called a spiritual Hamsa. Vedic seekers must effort to emulate Hamsa-like ideals in their personal lives.

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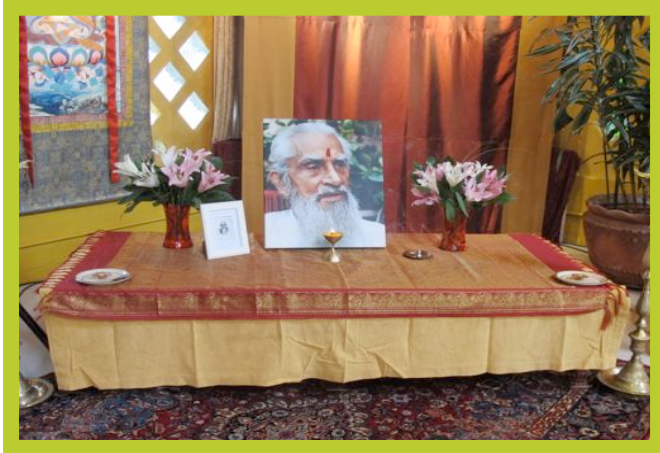
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Returning to our Lineage Roots

October 2014

Vol. 1 Issue 1



Sunday, July 20th, 2014 marked a momentous occasion in Vedika Gurukula's history, with the inauguration ceremony of our Vedic Studies Program. The space was beautifully decorated, the event flowed seamlessly, thank to countless hands offerings *sevā* (selfless service) of all kinds, the food was delicious, and the words spoken by Āchārya Shunya ji and Sadasyas who shared on all of our behalf were incredibly heartfelt and touching. A palpable *Sattvic* (pure, harmonious, balanced) vibration could be felt by all – those physically present, as well as the many Sadasyas who joined via webinar, and those who were with us in spirit.

Many Sadasyas received new names from Āchārya Shunya ji, to remind us of the unfolding of our higher Self. Sadasyas were reminded of our responsibility of *parokāra* (to serve humanity selflessly), *svadhāya* (to learn), and *pravachanam* (to teach).

The new Vedic Studies platform represents, in many ways, a return to the Vedika Lineage roots of *Sadharan Dharma Sabha*, the Vedic learning platform created by Āchārya Shunya ji's great-grandfather, Bade Baba, and continued by her direct teacher, Baba. An official Ashram fundraising campaign was also launched at the Sadasya Initiation for an Ashram to continue to allow these precious teachings to unfold in a profound way.



Sadasya Initiation Ceremony
July 20th, 2014



As a traveler with some cosmic time to enjoy on *Bhu loka* (our material plane of existence), I notice that this experience has some themes.

I have been given some equipment to navigate on *Bhu loka*, and they are my *ahamkāra* – sense of I-ness, my *buddhi* – wisdom capacity, my *smṛiti* – storehouse of impressions, my *manas* – rational capacity to interact on a daily basis, my five *jñānendriya* – sensors for receiving inputs from this world, my five *karmendriya* – faculties to act on this world.

So, who am I? The observer, wielding all this equipment. Now, until I knew about myself, I followed either my instincts to achieve whatever was in my storehouse of desires, or the gratification that my senses could feel, or the path shown by others around me. No judgment or guilt trip here. We are taught that desires are not bad. The whole universe arose out of divine desire. What we do need to know is that we can act to achieve some desires, others need to be delayed, postponed or moderated, and still others are to be restrained.

To fulfill my desires, some of the actions were *sattvic* – maximally helped others, others were overly *rajasic* – fuelled by a drive with blinkers on, and some were negatively *tamasic* – those actually hindered me. All of these qualities are in me. Don't get me wrong, I need all three to enjoy this experience on *Bhu loka*. Without *rajas*, intention and thought would never be transformed into action. Without *tamas*, I would not be able to rest, recharge or take a break. However, the balanced expression of these qualities depends on who is in the driver seat of my vehicle.

One of the big themes in this *Bhu loka* experience is *karma* – action. Actions that I have done in the past or were done to me, actions that I am doing now or are in play in my life at the moment, actions that I am contemplating or will appear on the stage of my life. So, I can safely say that all beings here are creators, experiencers, and observers of action.

To steer me towards knowing who was driving the vehicle, I had to experience all the ripples of action that had been started in the pond. Frankly, some of them threw me, because I could not make any sense of them and refused to learn their simple lessons; some of them were so pleasurable that I was happy to take all the credit or wanted them to continue forever; but in all this, I could not say, for sure, what I would do when faced with the next arrangement of circumstances in life.

I could see all that was going on, but it was directly going into my storehouse of impressions, without being processed. Hence, actions, reactions, more actions just followed, creating a maze through a city, leading me sometimes to magnificent mansions filled with all kinds of abundance, and at other times, to slums with deprivation and dire poverty.

That's when the Guru's teachings uplifted me. The Guru is someone who has observed and then gone to the next level of living life, with intention, with purpose, and with a sense of joy. The Guru taught me in the way I could assimilate, taught me how to overcome the suffering associated with actions and results, pleasant or unpleasant. Does this mean that everything would work out perfectly once I learned the recipe? I don't know. Why obsess about the result? Why not enjoy the journey, with the help of my new tools?

Now I can think of karma as ripples of energy intersecting at various times in this span of life. Others like me are also buffeted by these ripples that are coming towards them or created by them. Knowing that these eddies of karma energy were set in place by *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic* desires, I am in a better position to decide my course of action. Which means that I needed to look at the journey a little differently. That is how the word "attitude" started making sense! Attitude is a sequential fusion of my deepest intention, my mind energy – thoughts, and my physical energy – actions. So, now I am in the driver's seat and I am beginning to drive the vehicle.

The Guru offers a practical philosophy towards karma; a way to unite intention, thought, speech, and action. What was that word? Oh, yeah, *yoga*. The Guru taught us from the same lessons that Sri Krishna taught Arjuna when he was caught in the quagmire of feelings, emotions, attachments, duty, and responsibility. *Jñāna* is the light that shines on the map of karma, enabling us to navigate through *samsāra* (our self-created universe of our own projections), like empowered cosmic travellers.

Sometimes I am required to do the same boring tasks over and over again, with no acknowledgement from anyone around me. Sometimes I have to stand up for what I believe in, by voicing my opinion, by stating my viewpoint. I put in my effort, money, and trust in things that do not promise me any returns, but I believe in them and feel that they are *dharmic*. Guru taught me about *Īshwara āraṇa buddhi*. Why *buddhi*? Because that is the part of me that learns, that can be trained to act with discrimination, which is the processor of my *samskāras* and *vāsanās* (deeply ingrained belief systems and habits).

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Karma Yoga – Uniting with Brahman through Action

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When I see that I am offering these tasks to Īshwara in a name and form, then it is a beautiful fresh flower that is offered every day, which adorns with fresh color and fragrance. So, it is repetitive, but isn't that repetitiveness now essential? Don't we love seeing fresh flowers at our altars, fresh fruit on our trees, brand new sunrises and don't we look forward to the moon doing its show every day? In India, there's a celebration when a person has seen a 1,000 full moons in their life. I guess that once-in-a-lifetime celebration is possible only because something is happening every day! Obviously, some entities don't mind doing the same thing again and again. And, they're not obsessing about it. This stabilizes me, helping me to act with stability and endurance.

During the flow of *prāna* called life, there have been and continue to be phases of feeling like "What did I do to deserve this? It is so unfair!" Or, "Yeah, this took a long time to come. I know I deserve it." The Guru said – *Īshwara prasāda buddhi*. How liberating to just accept that it has come, to get in touch with your feelings of revulsion or attraction, and then to process it with your knowledge. Act, so that the ripple of *dukha* (sorrow) goes no further, or the ripple of *sukha* (joy) does not drug you. There is some *samskāra* to be burned, some sweet lesson to be learned. When I felt that I was not supported or understood, it took me some time to come to this revelation "Let me ensure that I can support and understand another. Let me look around to see who I am not understanding or supporting in my life."

It was worth it, because I felt powerful with the ability to act, instead of drowned and defeated.

At other times, the learning is that there is no need to analyze so much. The command to act has come as a message from the Guru, from sacred sources, from the deepest intuition, from a connection with a higher consciousness. One's *viveka* (discriminative faculty) says that this is a *sattvic* action. Do it – *Īshwara āgyā*.

Through this journey, things do work out sometimes, laurels come our way, we are in the limelight, either through effort or in spite of it. At those times, what is the way to keep the boat on course? The Guru says "*nirmamaha*" - "not mine-ness." Just as every wave on the ocean adds to its beauty, so also each *Jīvātma* (individual soul) adds to the beauty of the expression of Brahman. If one wave wanted to take all the credit, what would we say to such a wave? Of course, we can appreciate and congratulate ourselves for being such a wonderful channel of Brahman and its infinite potential, and then the balancing thought is to remember all that has gone into the moment of success. By acknowledging the role of *drishyam* and *adrishyam* (what is seen and unseen), we stay on course.

Often, my prejudices, biases stare me in my face; above all, my judgments about people, things, and situations. I don't want to hide from them anymore. I wonder how to face them. And, then the Guru's sweet advice about "*shodhana* – purification" reminds me that this opportunity has come to cleanse the grime on my mirror. For example, I may feel that a person deserves their suffering because of their previous action or lack of it, their clogged up *vivekaha*. I can ride the high horse of judgment, or the camel of condescension, or simply be grounded, supportive, ready to offer a smile, an ear that can listen, a heart of love and compassion, a mind with clarity. Already, the weight of ego and pride starts to lessen.

The Guru also said "*vigata jwara*" - "without a mental fever." What does that mean? To me, it aptly describes the moment when I remember that I am the *Sākshi* – the witness, the observer. Not a bystander, mind you. It reminds us to be actively engaged in the process of our life, but without this sense of being driven, compelled, impatient, wanting to control the outcome of events. The moment I forget, I start manipulating, bossing others around, and losing it. Now, instead of *ātmabhāva* – the feeling of oneness, I start feeling that people, situations, and objects are hindering me and have become obstacles in the path of my success. When I am willing to let go of the fever, I start taking a step towards creativity, expansiveness, intuition, and compassion.

I enjoy the meticulousness, sacred vibrations, focus, and mantra chanting that can be seen at a fire ceremony, or a *yajna*. When I am there, everything is well. When it ends, and it is time to resume life, there is a sense of dejection. Why? Why should ordinary life be any different from a *yajna*? The Guru says that our actions can be with an attitude of performing a *yajna*. You are in the seat of the person performing the ritual. Take a few minutes to settle down. Remember your *ishtha* – beloved divine presence, or a sacred symbol, and with natural awareness, with all your oblations of *manas*, *buddhi*, *indriyas*, go for it. The Guru taught us about the five types of sacred actions – to honor the divine beings, our ancestors, our Gurus, to alleviate the suffering of our cohorts on *Bhu loka*, and to nurture the other forms of consciousness and existence on this plane. When I remember to perform these actions regularly, I stay in the driver seat more comfortably.

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Karma Yoga – Uniting with Brahman through Action

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The imbalanced torrents of rajasic thoughts and actions, the stagnated and energy-deprived tamasic quick sands are there on the path, but now I don't have to walk into them blindly. Rajas and tamas are now to be put in service of sattva, a natural flow towards the light.

I am often asked, what I have achieved with my engineering degree. The rehearsed answer was too convoluted and defensive. I had to find a simple expression of my deepest intention. So I say "to accept the requirements of *kāla* (time)." By this, I mean that *kāla* asks different things of us at different times in our life. What would be an empowering response to *kāla*? Act for dharma. Each phase of life has a dharma. It is a beautiful combination of who you are, your purpose at that moment of cosmic time, and what is required of you to hold your strand of the cosmic web. At its best, it will be a clarifying of the *ahamkāra*. Rest assured, it will never ever hold you down, put you behind or leave you out. It is a step forward on the path.

Life is a work in progress and a function of time. So, I remind myself - nurture this self, this body, this mind, and this buddhi – my best friends in this time travel, so that karma is a liberation, not a bondage. Oh, and don't forget to have fun. The deepest joy and spontaneity is there, ready to bubble through, as the dust is wiped away by the cleaning cloth of *jñāna* and karma.

This article has been compiled by Āchārya Shunya ji's student Vaidehi.



Just as the tangible universe is a blend of five co-operating elements, the nature and inter relationship of components of Vedic *Satsangha* (gathering of Truth) can similarly be represented in terms of the *panchmahabhutas* (the five great elements).

Ether

This is the space provided by the *Sampradāya* (spiritual family). Vedic knowledge is such an ocean. If you dive into the ocean itself, you will not know which manta to study first, how the knowledge connects together, or how to build a substantive body of understanding within such a vast expanse. Until such time the student has a *sampradāya* with clear guiding values (for example, Vedika's of *Sādhanā*, spiritual discipline, *Satsangha*, gathering around Truth, and *Sevā* (selfless service), an established tradition of teaching, and a role model to follow as teacher, there is no context created for learning. Without a defined field of study, a person's intellect on its own may cook up all kinds of scenarios that 'I am spiritually progressing,' but these may just be imaginary situations.

Air

The *Āchārya* (head of the *Sampradāya*) is given the seat of Air, because they are both related with speech and bringing about movement. When the *Āchārya* speaks, some shift is made within each student's consciousness. Whenever you come to *Satsangha*, who you were before and what was working for you has changed. Only *vāyu* (air) can do that. The *Āchārya* is the force that pushes the envelope and the comfort zone of where we are to move us closer to the Truth.

Fire

No cooking can take place if there is no *Agni* (fire). The movement of air is just loose talk without fire. Similarly, *Agni* cannot work without *Vāyu*; *Shāstra* (our traditional Vedic scriptures) cannot illuminate the student's consciousness without the *Āchārya*'s speech. Therefore, when there is a union between the flame of *Shāstra* knowledge, and the air of the *Āchārya*'s speech, cohesion and condensation is brought about in the student. *Shāstra* has thus been given the status of fire.

Water

The student is the water. Water is calm and cool. This means the student will remain somewhat cool during the learning process.



The student will keep a tab on his or her passions, emotions, and reactions during the process. Water also has a quality that it comes together, and this implies that the students will stay together in a *Sangha* (community). Water tends to flow downwards, and the students will have a tendency to sublimate themselves and naturally have *vinaya* (humility). Also, when water collects somewhere and becomes still and clear of sediment, you can see your reflection. Water has this reflective quality that is to be contemplated, as well.

Earth

Āshrama is the physical space where we have continuity, so it is the Earth. First, our *Sampradāya* had continuity for several hundred years in Ayodhya, India. Then there was a break. Now *Āchārya* Shunya ji is here in U.S. and we have had some continuity on Doyle Street. The real continuity will come when we have an established physical structure.

Relationship of Elements

The *Āshrama* then holds the *Āchārya*, who holds the *Shāstra*. It is important to see that there is no direct relationship between *Āchārya* and *Sadasya*. The *Āchārya* has a relationship with the student with *Shāstra* in between. The teacher and student are not buddies who go out to lunch together. They only dialogue for *Shāstra*.

Āchārya holds *Shāstra*, *Shāstra* holds the *Sadasya*, *Sadasya* gives Earth to the *Āshrama*. The Earth aspect of the *Āshrama*, the teacher's feet, the teacher's house, the temple of knowledge and all of this is held by the student.

Moksha – the Kshaya of Moha

“Shunya ji recently shared in Satsangha the Sanskrit root of ‘moksha’ – the ‘kshaya of moha.’ So it’s the complete destruction of confusion. And I like that....because it isn’t some namby-pamby little tripping down the garden path magically finding myself some place. No, it’s work, it’s consistency, it’s endurance, it’s *dhī* (discrimination), it’s *dhritī* (endurance), it’s *smritī* (recollection). It’s that confusion to ‘Oh! I am the one responsible for that destruction of confusion.’ It gives me something to work with and it also reminds me every moment that it’s responsibility, it’s actually choice. I’m choosing to stay in a lie, to stay in confusion, or I’m choosing to have some *sharaddhā*, some faith in my teacher, in these teachings, to stick with it that Observer, to stick with that part of me that knows that confusion is not the Truth. The confusion is not real.’ - Aparna

Goodness and Satya

“This knowledge has become an unfoldment, an expansion of who I recognize myself to be. If *Brahman* is the ever-expanding consciousness, and Brahman is everywhere and everyone, then I am also a part of this perfect divine expression. When I remember this truth, this *satyam*, then I can offer what I do as a service to the Divine and there is nothing but goodness around – the day starts by greeting the sun, nourishing *sattvic* (pure) food is cooking, my family growing closer and healthier, there is peace and joy, the ghee lamps are lit. I am doing life, but more gracefully, I recognize that I can bring goodness and *sattva* (purity, harmony, and balance) to this day, to this person, to this moment and my prayer is that I continue to grow in my ability to embody this sacred knowledge.” - Basia



Gayatri Mantra – My Saving Grace

“The inclusiveness, connectivity, and purpose I receive from this divine wisdom has completely transformed my spiritual beliefs. I no longer have to be uncomfortable or fearful of prayer. As I feel my courage and trust increase, the power of prayer is shifting my consciousness and soul. Finally, I am able to claim my spiritual path, and take confident ownership of my truth. To know that my true organic nature is bright, whole, immortal, and limitless is exactly the foundation that I needed in order to shift my reality.

Now that I have my foundation set in place, I am able to use the Vedic teachings to observe my thoughts, speech, actions, and behaviors through focusing on the light, I feel full of abundance and gratitude. Through the knowledge of *viveka*, discrimination, I have been able to redirect my empty, negative, judgmental, and malicious thoughts. If I catch myself drifting into these kinds of thoughts, my mind instantly starts chanting the *Gayatri* mantra. The *Gayatri* mantra has given me more light than I could ever describe. It has been my saving grace throughout the last 3 years. It is at the core of my being.”

-Soumya

Invitation to Contribute

October 2014

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This magazine is a seva offering created by Sadasya members for the benefit of the entire Sadasya kula. There are many ways you, too, can gift your words and insights to the rest of your conscious community. If you are interested in writing an article on a topic covered in a recent Satsangha, sharing your personal reflections on how this knowledge is changing your life, editing stories from our lineage, or exploring facets of this unique model of Vedic education, please contact Ishani, magazine Editor, at ishani.lauren@gmail.com.

Sevite Team

- Ishani Lauren Naidu – Editor
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- Fiana Anderson – Content Editor
- Ananta Ripa Ajmera – Content Editor
- Vaidehi Shivani Maheshwari – Contributing Writer
- Ashley Caputo – Contributing Photographer

A note on Sanskrit spellings

Sanskrit words have been transliterated from the original Devanagari using a blend of phonetic spellings and diacritical marks. We have tried to use a format that will allow a reader who may not be very familiar with technical standardized Sanskrit transliteration to read the articles naturally and intuitively understand a close approximation of the pronunciation of the words.