

navratri

IN THE HAIDAKHANDI TRADITION





Introduction

This booklet is written to help you to understand and know more about this greatest festival within the Haidakhandi tradition. It is also an inspiration to deepen your experience with the Divine and provides guidelines how to practice and why. It is said that this particular time in the year is most beneficial for your sadhana (spiritual practice).

Babaji

Babaji is an immortal yogi, from time to time manifesting in a physical form. There are many stories and much information of His appearances and teachings but here we will not go into extensive explanations about His legend.

You have come to His ashram and probably are about to participate in Navaratri which is a great opportunity to meet Him. In these blessed days His presence can be strongly felt but if you are new to all of this how can you recognize It? Please



know that you are only here because you have been invited by Babaji, so feel welcome and look for Him in your own heart. Call Him by His name and talk to Him from your heart. Babaji has promised that He will answer the call of any sincere seeker who calls Him. The high vibrations of His ashram and these auspicious days will create a perfect setting to start the best relationship you ever had. Perhaps you love another Guru or another religion, but let that not be an obstacle in your experience of the Divine: nameless, formless and in your own heart.

We make pranaam or prostrations to His statues, throne and pictures. If that is also your experience, then that is wonderful, but there is no need to copy what you do not feel is right for you. To make pranaam symbolises surrendering to Him. It often helps to do something physical to direct our wavering mind, but what truly counts is your intention in this action. This can be felt as a continuous happening inside your own heart: and when it is perfected in your every action, you will experience it as an intensity of the Divine harmony of all things.

Navaratri

'Navratri' means 9 nights. According to the scriptures there are actually 4 Navaratri in a year of which 2 are the main ones, observed in many places all over India. These dates are also at the turn of the seasons. It is a time when fasting and taking a few steps back from our daily patterns are very beneficial for body, emotions, mind and spirit.

Babaji has introduced a certain program and under the guidance of Shri Muniraj we have practiced this form of sadhana in His ashrams all over the world. We observe the Chaitra (Spring) and the Ashwin (Autumn) Navratris. These dates change according to the position of the moon and the Vedic Calendar. It always starts at the dark moon.

Amba Amba Jai Jagdamba, sarvarup he tu hi Amba
Mother O Mother hail to You, You are all the forms in the Universe.

The Divine Mother represents that timeless ocean from which came forth everything manifest and un-manifest in the universe. There are many names for the Divine Mother in the sacred scriptures of India. The main one from which all other forms have sprung forth is Shri Durga Devi. She divided Herself again in three major forms, which are Shri Maha Kali, Shri Maha Lakshmi and Shri Maha Saraswati. From these three forms she divided Herself again in nine forms for the days of Navaratri. These are ; 1- Shailputri, 2- Brahmacharini, 3- Chandra Ghanta, 4- Kushmanda, 5- Skanda Mata, 6- Katyaini, 7- Kalratri, 8- MahaGauri, 9- Siddhidatri. Apart from small changes in the Sanskrit prayers there is no noticeable difference in the program, it is all Durga Devi throughout.

The meaning of Navratri is explained well in the Shrimad Devi Bhagavatam. In this Sanskrit text the Divine Mother, with her many aspects, forms and qualities, are described in fine detail within a mythological framework. Various



kinds of ferocious demons do battle with different forms of Durga Devi: in essence a beautiful tale of good triumphing over evil. This also occurs in other great Indian scriptures like the Ramayana and the Maha Bharata which contains the Bhagavat Gita. These depict epic wars where dharma triumphs over adarma. These legends are the fabric on which Indian society and Hinduism is embroidered, and have been recognised as such for many hundreds of years. The understanding of the general populace has evolved in the last 1000 to 2000 years. The holy scriptures are written in such a way that all levels of thinking can find some understanding and value, while the essence is preserved from whichever era that this fine knowledge reached the open ear.

The fact is (Kai he ki) that these battles of good over evil symbolise the essence of our own and all human life, from hundreds of years back and right up to today. The various demons that appear in these tales are none other than pride, jealousy, greed, lust, fear, anger, me and mine: ego forces we all suffer in a more or less similar way. The various forms of the Divine represent compassion, courage, love, patience, generosity etc. Most of us are not aware that our life evolves as a result of this constant struggle between these Divine and demonic forces. Just about every thought is influenced by them and therefore so are the decisions we take in our life. Becoming conscious of this inner struggle our lives are subjected to this essence: a non-dogma-ridden approach of all who walk the spiritual path. This is true Sanatan Dharma (the eternal path) and the core of all religions.



Navratri Haidakhandi style was created by Babaji, with the help of Shri Muniraj & Shri Vishnu Datt Shastri. It is the way that we are celebrating it now in Babaji's ashrams. The Navratri days are astrologically empowered with all the different puja's, Sanskrit invocations, devotional expressions and selfless service. They become a tangible purification and boost for those in search of their Divine essence.

This is all an extremely powerful formula that Babaji has given us seekers on the path. Being at these auspicious days in the ashram is a great blessing, but it still needs to be done correctly to receive the full blessings and benefit of that which is being offered.

So follow the program as much as you can, and don't worry about a bit of stress or physical discomfort and it may well become a life altering experience for you!



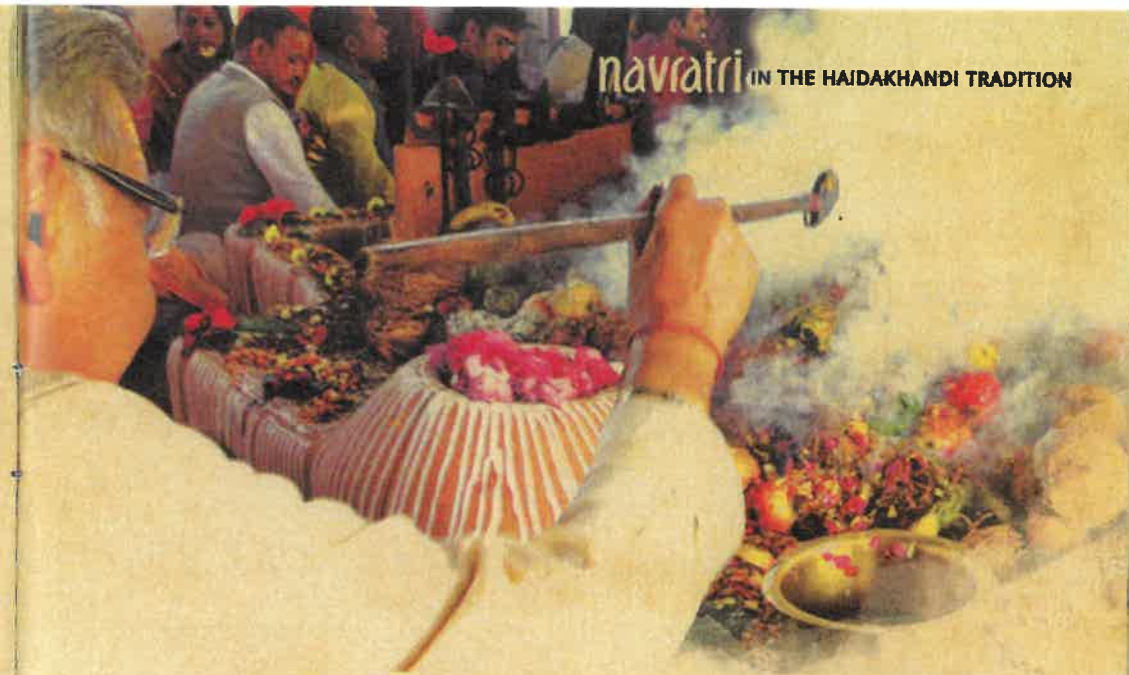
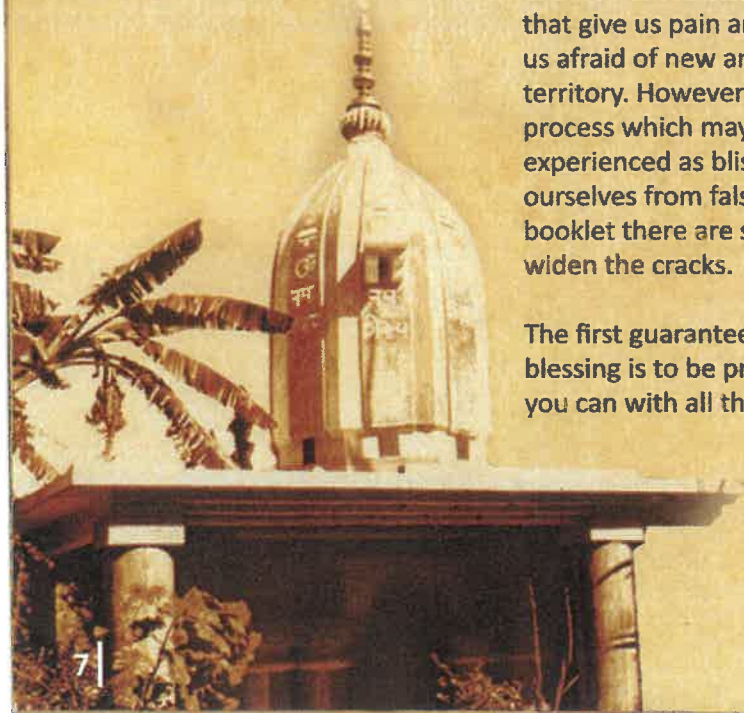
Herakhan Vishwa Mahadham & Anandpuri Ashrams

There are quite a lot of things to say about Babaji's home in Herakhan, the meaning etc., and also about Anandpuri ashram, but here we limit the information to that pertaining to a Navaratri visit. Just being in these sacred places empowered by Babaji and all those who have done sadhana here (spiritual practice), already bestows a great blessing and is the best start for the deepening of your spiritual path.

Being in an ashram in India, particularly for people from abroad, means breaking with most of our daily habits. All the usual things we do are very different. We dress, bath & toilet, sleep and eat very differently. We stand in line for things that do not make logical sense. We burn good food and starve ourselves a bit. Breaking with our usual pattern creates cracks in our vision of life. It is through these cracks that the Divine light shines in! This may not appear to be always so pleasant at times, as we hold on tightly to our vision of life.

We love our habits including the ones that give us pain and which can make us afraid of new and unknown territory. However this is a purification process which may very soon be experienced as bliss, as we relieve ourselves from false realities. In this booklet there are several tools to widen the cracks.

The first guarantee for a full Navratri blessing is to be present as much as you can with all the various activities



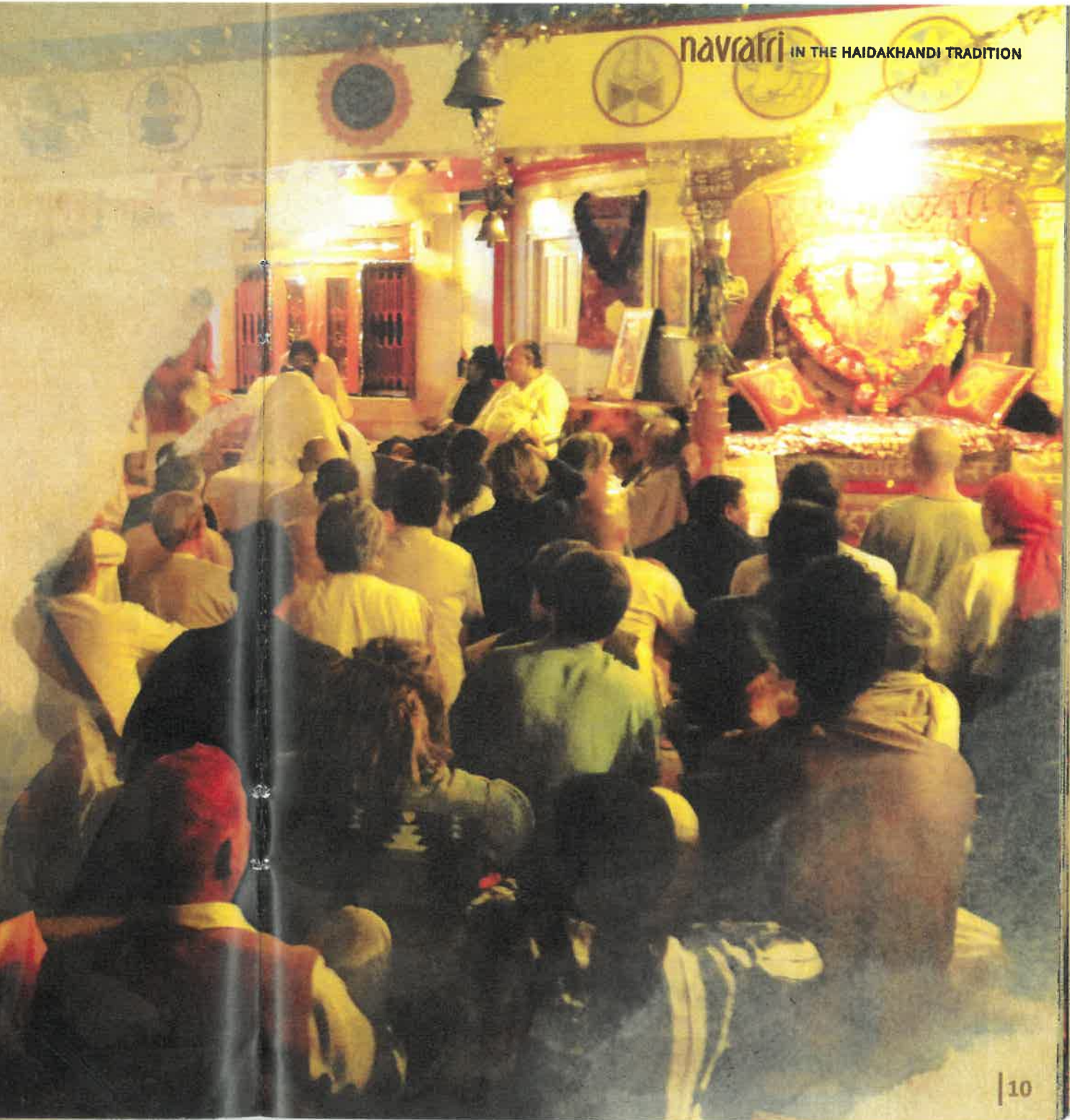
on the programme for the whole 9 days. Simple but not always easy as at a certain point fatigue may crop up within this intense program with its strong purifying vibrations. It is also recommended to sleep less than normal. To reach the deeper levels of our unconscious we need to break thru the usual thought patterns of our mental experience of the world. This does not come easy, so we need to do unusual practices that may seem a bit extreme at times, in order to actually break through to a cleaner experience of the Divine.

Mundan

Mundan is a complete head shave, an offering to the Divine of our vanity and a sign of surrendering and new beginnings. Babaji wanted everybody coming to Herakhan to take a mundan. He said that it was easier for Him to enter our head. Our hair holds much accumulated mental energy which is not so easy to wash away with shampoo. For a fresh beginning to the rest of your life mundan is highly recommend for the full experience!

Fasting

It is also highly advised to eat only once a day and at the provided Bandara. Of course one can eat the prasaad that is shared on many occasions throughout the day. If attachment to food, or for certain body types that require more food, it is advised to keep it light such as some fruit. Deeper practice can also be done by keeping a complete 9 day fast on only fruit or just water for 9 days. If done with the right mindset such practices give an enormous boost in deepening your sadhana⁽¹⁾. The food of the bandara is first offered to Babaji & the Mother and therefore it is blessed food, called prasaad. In these auspicious days it gives you so much more than what can be obtained from the chai shops or other restaurants which at best just gratify the taste buds. Sitting on the floor eating from a plate made of leaves is not the most comfortable lunch but aids the aspiration to simplicity that benefits the full experience!



Maon

Keeping maon (not speaking) is a great practice to enable us to focus on our inner world. If for practical matters communication is required one can always write down a small message but it avoids all the chatter and it will be easier to maintain your inward concentration. We lose a lot of inward focus and subtle energy through our chit chat. Talking is what we already know; here are some great opportunities to learn about things inside of us which will be new and authentically your own experience. A limited maon can be keeping silence until havan is over to give you a taste of this powerful mindfulness practice.

Japa

Doing Japa is a great support to be focused on the holy name and has a wonderful calming and purifying effect. It keeps our mind from wandering and repeating the same thought patterns we have been doing for so long. **OM NAMAHA SHIVAY** is the maha mantra and its repetition is strongly advocated by Babaji who said it is more powerful than the atom bomb. A main mantra for Navaratri in particular is;

OM AIM HRIIM KLIIM CHAMUNDAYEE VICHEE.

Another important mantra to practice in these auspicious days is the Gayatri Mantra;

OM BHUR BHUWAH SWAHA TAT SAVITUR VARENYAM BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHI DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODAYAT.

Of course if you have your personal mantra given by your guru this is also good, the point is to be focused on the holy name all the time. It is highly advised by Babaji and many other great saints.

Karma Yoga & Seva⁽²⁾

This is Babaji's main teaching for this day and age and is a great opportunity to show dedication to His teachings. Our ashrams are usually occupied by a handful of devotees who have taken on the main responsibilities. During Navaratri sometimes 50 to a 100 times the numbers of devotees can arrive and also daily activities are much more diverse. Many extra hands are needed to make such a large celebration possible. Kitchen, guard and cleaning duties etc. are constantly required. Apart from making the whole Navaratri experience possible for everybody it also gives you a perspective of the festival from a different angle and creates the sensation of being





part of it all rather than just a visitor. These duties are usually distributed the days before Navaratri or when registering. It is good to remind yourself here that it is not so much important what others do, but more what you can do for others. If you happily involve yourself in activities to be done, this is karma yoga. If you do it with doubt because you feel you must and there is resistance, only karma will come without the yoga.

Bhajan Singing

There are set times for this after the aarti, during Devi puja etc. but it can also spontaneously erupt somewhere, initiated by one of the many musicians that the Babaji's family has. When you are new to this it is not easy to understand, as it is more a matter of the heart rather than understanding. Try to feel into this, for when you do find that spirit, it may become one of the greatest joys of your life. Before one learns the words, and finds that deep spiritual connection,

please do not play any instruments as it can disturb the subtle harmony. It is a devotional practice that opens up new levels of experiencing the Divine in you.

Prasaad

All of us come to the Divine to ask for something: an experience of oneness, blessings, guidance, wisdom, health, babies, jobs or material things. The Divine knows very well what is in our hearts and there is no need to ask for anything but we often cannot help ourselves and do it anyway. On the other hand it may also be necessary at times to get a clear focus on what is needed for the fulfilment of our life and to have a clear perception of what we might need to reach our goal. Babaji said about this: "I have come to give, but you do not know what to ask for".

Life in general is about give and take, an energy exchange. But what can we possibly bring to please the Divine? God wants our devotion, our dedication and our one pointed focus, which we can express through our Sadhana by performing Japa, meditation, karma yoga etc. On the material plain, food is a vital aspect of life, and so we can bring offerings that can be distributed again as prasaad amongst the devotees. This can be fruit, sweets or nuts. We might buy a bag of fruit or toffees and pass this to those who organise it for distribution. Washing the fruits first is recommended so that clean prasaad is offered. We could go further and wash and cut the fruit and decorate a plate with nuts in a beautiful design and present these as if Babaji is physically sitting on His asan. It all depends how much devotion we want to put into our actions. The more you give in your devotion, attention and awareness the more you will receive. Biscuits and salty foods are not considered proper prasaad.



Experiencing bliss

Just being in the ashram during these blessed days, while you follow a little of the programme, will already make you feel elevated by the Divine vibrations. Your heart will open and you will have a great time whatever you do. It is wonderful to sit in a tea shop and chat with people, or communicate with others far away now that we all have such means of communication at hand. Having a good time is nice but not so special in our lives, on the other hand to have real opportunity to deepen your relationship with the Divine is very rare. You have come from far away and perhaps it was not so easy getting to this sacred place at this auspicious time, and so it is warmly recommended, for your own benefit, to take seriously the guidance and advice in this booklet.

The daily program

We start with our morning bath between 3am and 4.30am. This time is called Brahma Muhurta (Divine moment)

and considered the most auspicious moment of the day to connect with the Divine. This bath is not only to become clean, but also to rinse ourselves of the accumulated mental activity during the night and start with a fresh day. In Herakhan there is the big advantage of bathing in the river. Babaji insisted that we take our bath there. As the water is highly energised running down from the Himalayas over the rocks of a sacred river, one feels vibrant and refreshed. The process of going bathing there with the stars as your witness puts you in touch with the beautiful energy that Herakhan and nature is offering. If you are physically able it is an important aspect of being in Herakhan, Babaji's home !

Chandan

Chandan means sandalwood in Hindi and is the main ingredient in the yellow paste applied to the forehead. This is prasaad, as it has already been offered to Babaji's padukas in the early morning puja. The yellow paste has a cooling, calming effect on the mind but can only be sensed if one spends the time afterwards in Meditation, Japa, chanting and reading of scriptures, etc. There are several



kumkum and water are made and also here the 5 elements each have their part. The fire plays the central role in symbolically removing the darkness of ignorance between God and the devotee. We offer aarti to Babaji and the prayers appeal to His grace for the fulfilment of all desires and dispelling the darkness of ignorance. Some of these prayers are in Sanskrit while others are in Hindi. These prayers were written and assembled by Mahendra Baba, a great saint and prime devotee of Babaji whose lifelong penance was said to have been the reason for Babaji's reappearance amongst us in 1970. Singing the aarti brings Babaji closer to you and it opens your heart. On a more practical note it also clears your throat and aids breathing and concentration.



Paduka Puja

The padukas symbolize Babaji's presence amongst us. What we do during Navaratri and other festivals was being performed to Babaji when He was physically amongst us. The first puja of the day is the paduka puja in His kutir where only a small group of people are present. The padukas are bathed, oiled with perfume, offered a janeo (sacred thread), clothes are offered, and then chandan, kumkum, rice, flowers, food and dakshina (money). After this chandan is applied to all devotees.



'designs' of chandan which are applied in India. We usually have the tripundstyle which symbolizes the Shiva sign. The 3 lines stand for the 3 guna's. Satya, Raja and Tamasguna⁽⁴⁾. The red dot is the sign for the Divine Mother and is applied to the 3rd eye, the seat of Lord Shiva. Aksat, the rice, has the quality of attracting Lord Ganesh, the remover of obstacles.

Small havan

In Herakhan, during and immediately after chandan, a short havan is offered in the Maha Shakti Dhuni. In Chillyanoula there is a short havan in Shri Muniraj's Dhuni. Both places are small and cannot fit many people.

Aarti

Aarti in Hindi means lights and is a daily worship offering light to the supreme deity personified in a statue, picture or symbol of God. Offerings of fire, incense, ghee, camphor, flowers, rice, chandan,



Around 8.30 the padukas are carried to the temple while those who accompany are proclaiming:
 "Hoshiaarsaabdahan,
 Shri Shri Kashi
 Vishwanath-
 padharrahehain,
 Hoshiaarsaabdahan
 Shri Shri Maha

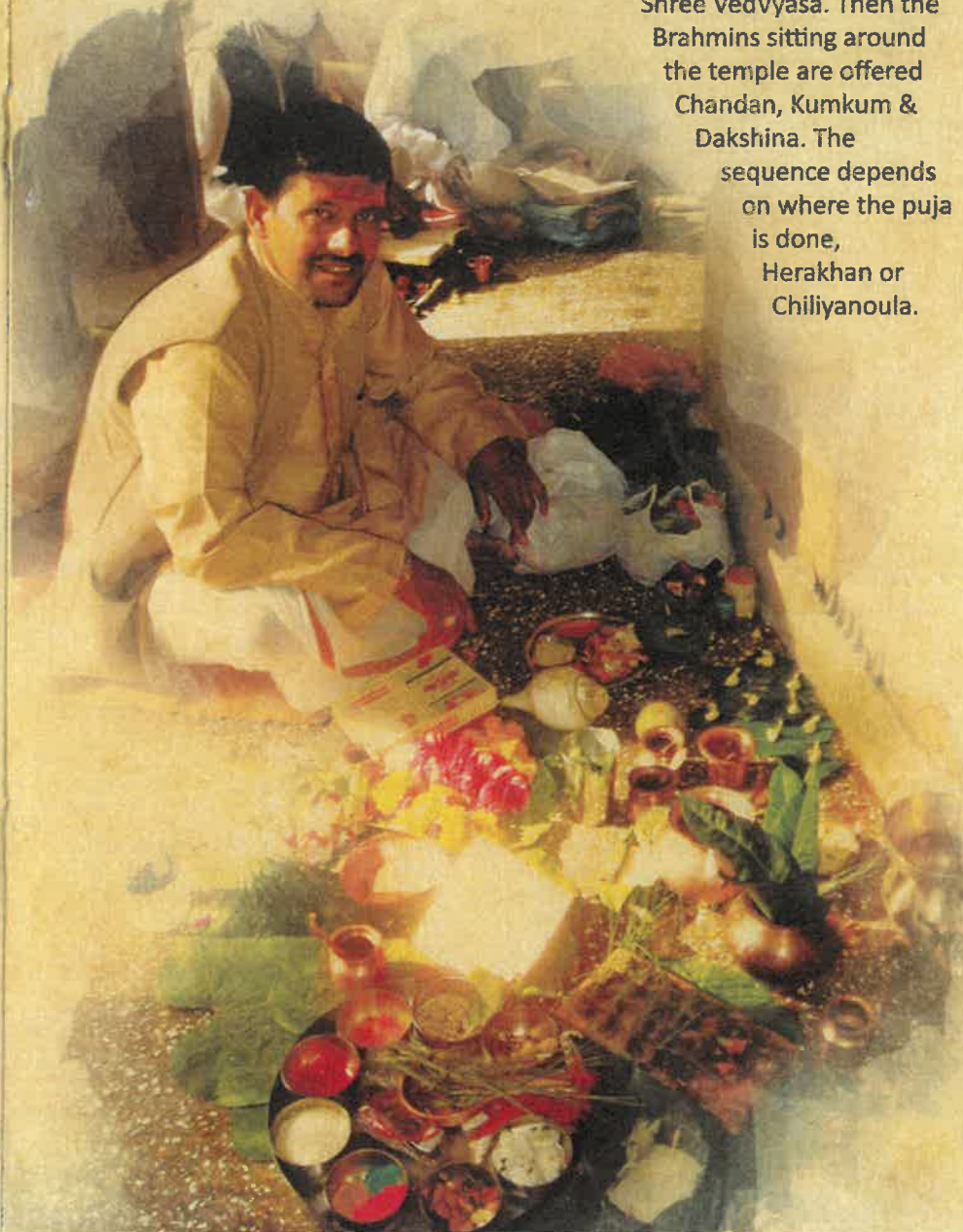
Prabhuji Padharrahehain". This means: "Be careful and pay attention, The Lord of Kashi (Shiva) is coming, be careful, pay attention, the Lord of Lords is coming". In Babaji's presence years ago this was often a joyous occasion.

Then in the temple with everybody present the second paduka puja is offered. Depending on how many people are present, most people will get a chance to offer the light. If you have a desire to participate make it known to somebody up front in advance so you can be helped. In Herakhan the padukas are not brought out in the evening however in Chilianoula there are 2 more paduka puja's, one in the kutir and the other soon after in the temple again with everybody present.

Durga puja

This elaborate puja is offered in fast succession. Here only people who are familiar with this ritual are actively participating but many can passively be present while calling the Devi, in a meditative mood. One can also participate by repeating certain mantras and by offering dakshina(money). In the sequence of the puja first Lord Ganesh is worshipped followed by Surya (Sun), Deepak (light), Matri(16 Devi's) then Kallash (water pots – which signify Lord Brahma & Lord Varun)

and Navgrah(the nine planets). Then puja is offered to Shree Durga Devi. The puja here is done to Her in the form of the Shri Yantra⁽⁹⁾ embossed on a copper plate. Then a puja to Lord Shiva and Shree Babaji. Puja is also offered to Devi Bhagvat (The Sacred Book) and Shree VedVyasa. Then the Brahmins sitting around the temple are offered Chandan, Kumkum & Dakshina. The sequence depends on where the puja is done, Herakhan or Chilianoula.

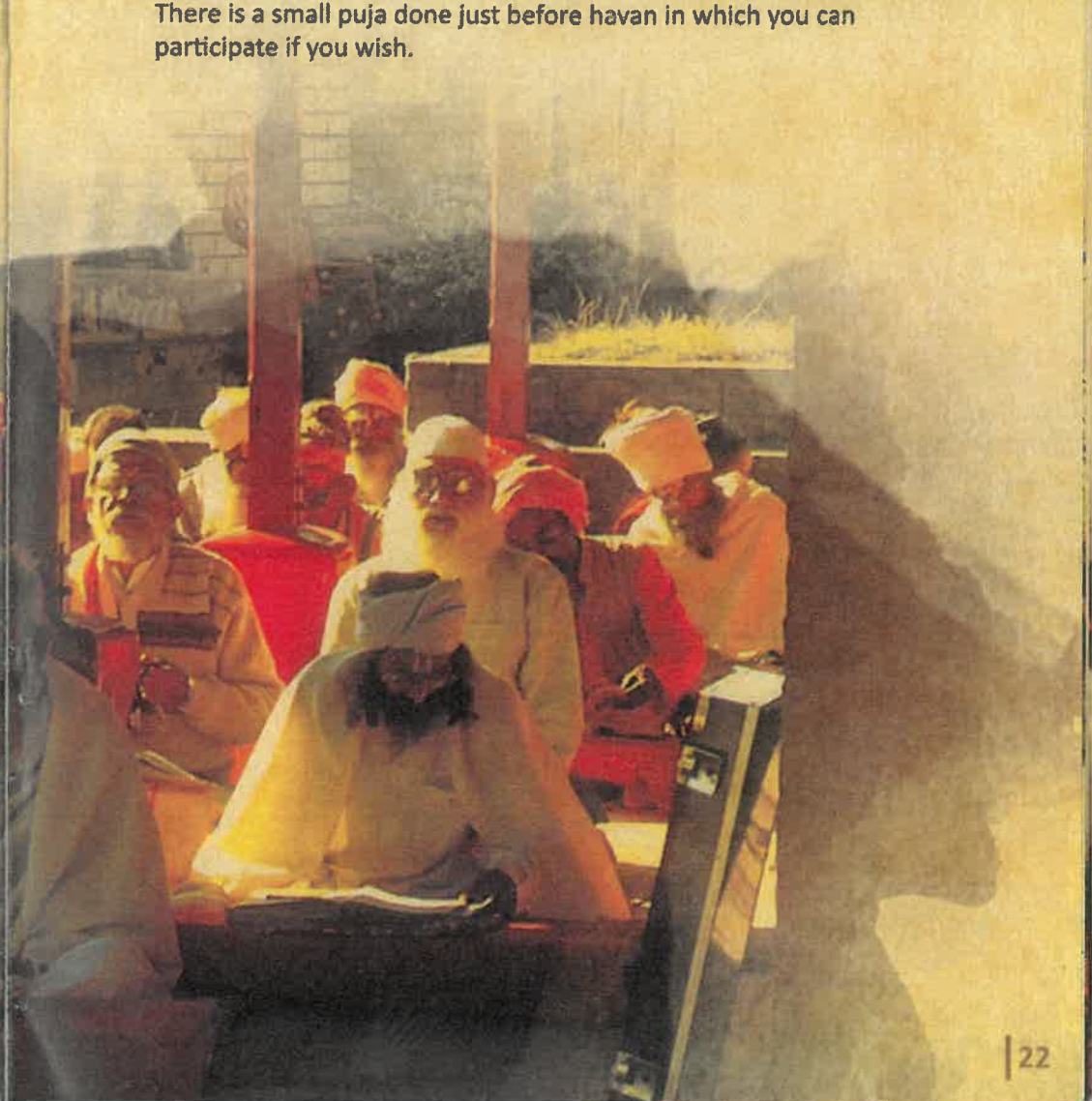
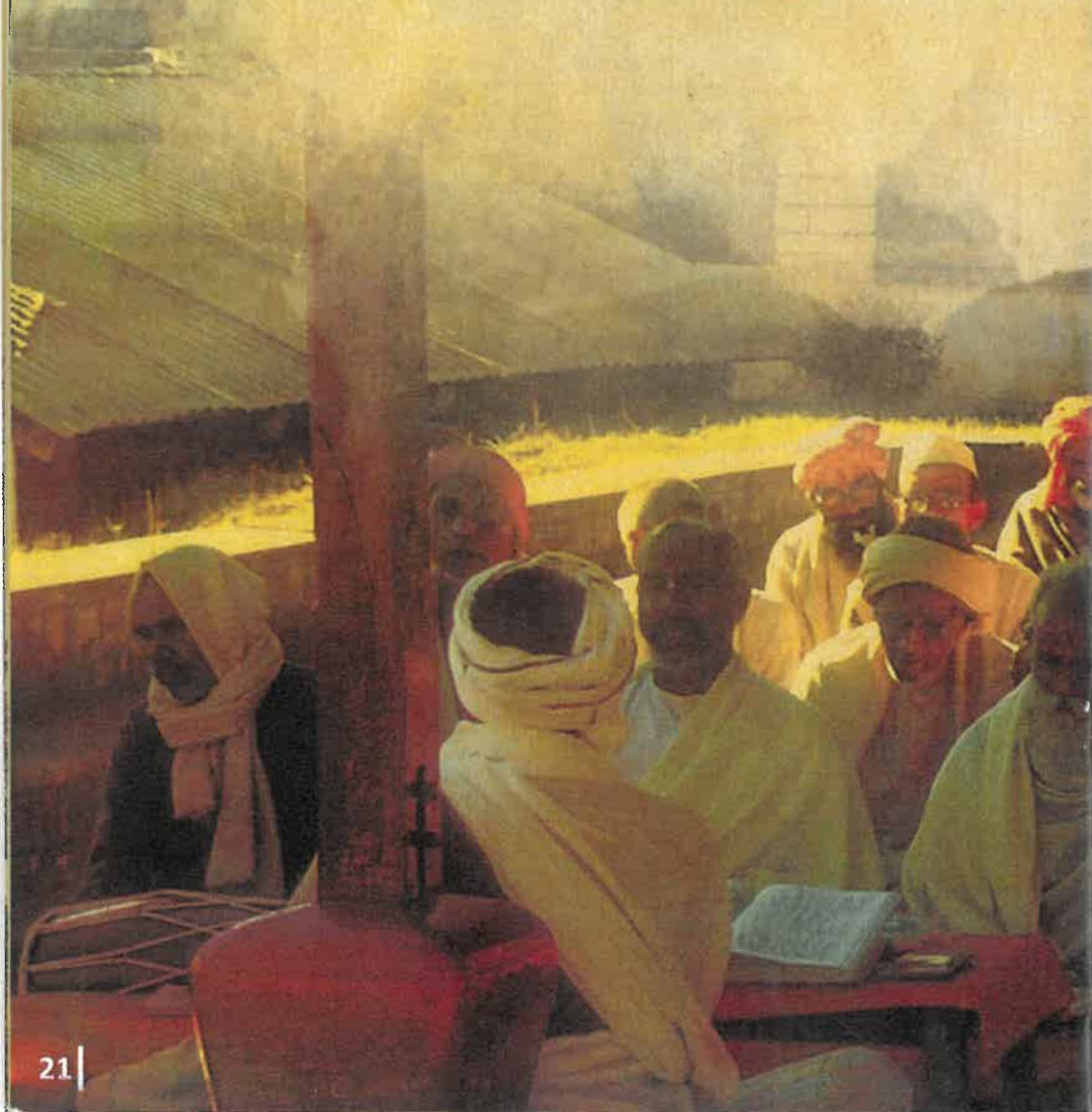


Saptasati reading

The Saptasati is written by Shri Vishnu Datt Acharya and composed of 700 names of the Divine Mother. Reading this on a daily basis our sub-consciousness harmonizes with the various aspects of the Divine Mother. At Navratri we read it all together to hail the Divine Mother, call on Her presence and also for practice and learning. It provides a beautiful atmosphere for meditation, by just being present.

The Ramayana

The Ramayana is an ancient epic of the story of Lord Ram and perhaps the most representative of what Hinduism is and has been in India for hundreds of years. This sacred book is being sung cover to cover during the 9 days of Navaratri next to the havankund by a group of Sadhu's from Vrindavan who devoted their life to only doing that. For 9 days in the morning you can listen to these chants. There is a small puja done just before havan in which you can participate if you wish.



Yagna

The 9 havan's (fire ceremonies) that are offered are called a Yagna and they are dedicated to The Divine Mother and to Babaji, and have great transforming powers. This is perhaps the most powerful ceremony of all and it is strongly advised never to miss one. We can see the firewood and offerings transforming and sense the energies from the spoken mantras. It nurtures creation at its very core, of which we are part, and reaches far and wide beyond the ashram. It helps to rebalance the relationship between the 5 elements. Many people are given a chance to participate by offering to the fire. In North India it is not customary for women to participate by offering, although there are some exceptions. Young woman should never participate in offering as it is said that this powerful ritual may damage the reproductive system. If you are being given a chance to offer you should have an empty stomach, clean hands and focused mind. Everybody can participate by bringing a coconut with your

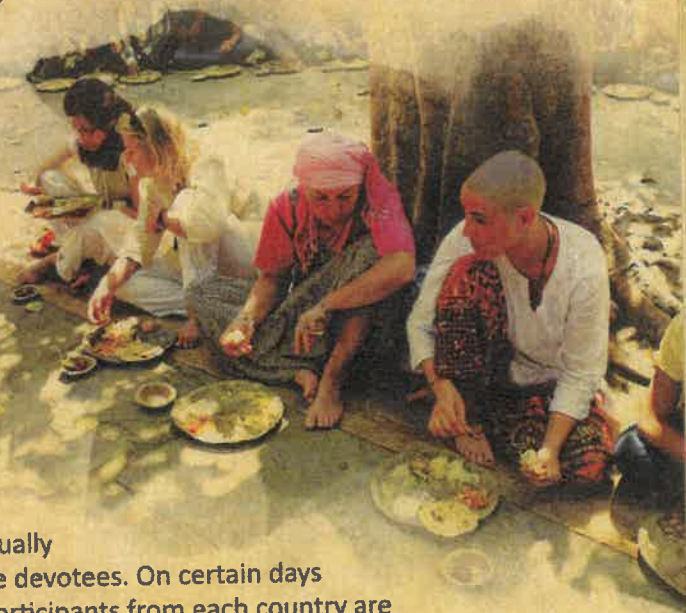
prayers as an offering, and also by saying "svaha" (I offer) after each mantra. It truly does not matter where you sit or stand but it is more important that your mind is focused. The Acharya reading the mantras is calling on the various aspects of the Divine to accept the offerings and the auspiciousness of this ritual is clearly sensed.

Satsang

Satsang means sitting in union with good people discussing spiritual matters and experiences. In our Babaji family generally it is talking about Babaji stories, particularly those happened in His presence, or other inner experiences people have had about Babaji. The place, timings and the intensity of this program is always changing, so please check the latest program for satsang.

Bandara

One meal a day is offered at the ashram. These bandaras are usually funded by one or more devotees. On certain days during Navaratri the participants from each country are asked to make monetary collections to offer such a bandara. This is also a feast for the local village people, in particular the children, to get such a tasty, rich and wholesome meal. The food is first offered to the various temples as prasaad, and hence there is no comparison energy wise between the bandara food and what is offered in local restaurants or tea shops. The distribution of food



during the bandara is also a fun festive time and gives a deeper sense of food distribution and connection between the people who are eating. Make sure if you are able to do this to not miss out on this service at least once.

Rest

This is a good moment to take a refreshing nap to keep up with the long intense days. It gives our minds and bodies a small break from the intense programme that we are adapting to.

Afternoon Bath

The afternoon bath takes place between 15.00 and 18.30 depending on your planning and most probably where you are. In Herakhan this is a lovely moment to be in the riverbed and take a leisurely bath in the refreshing river taking in the astonishing beauty of the place. Women need to be wearing a petticoat which is not the most comfortable way to bathe. Please note that even the quietest parts of the river at Herakhan can be observed by local people. We are here as guests of a very different culture and thoughts about gender equality, and freedom of expression for woman has not yet fully arrived. India is in transition about this in many ways. So please be vigilant both with your surroundings and your behaviour.

A quick shower in the bathroom can also suffice and will give you a fresh boost for a great evening.

Devi Bhagvatam reading & explanations

Around 16.00 our Acharya is reading from the Shrimad Devi Bhagvatam. He reads this large book from cover to cover during the

9 days. He narrates and comments on different stories of this fine ancient wisdom which is relevant to our lives right now. It is all translated into English.

Evening aarti & kirtan

First the Aarti is sung, followed by Bhajans and kirtan. This is the moment of devotion and release of the day. Some put their hearts into passionate singing and making music. When the Shakti rises dancing often happens, and sometimes a performance is offered and everybody passes for darshan. This is a great moment of gathering in devo



The night

Most of us will be tired after a full day. But if you are young or received a hit of Shakti and still have energy left, do not go and waste it with the usual "fun" or lying in your bed until you fall asleep. Instead find a quiet place like the Havankund, close to Babaji's kutir or the riverbed, bring your mala and enjoy the vibrant Divine energy at Babaji's ashram during Navratri. This is the real prasaad for the ardent follower. This is where those who really seek Him/Her will find what they are looking for.

If there is enough enthusiasm for it, a whole night of bhajans (singing) maybe held towards the end of Navaratri. This is usually around one of the sacred fire places.



Donations

The price for staying at the ashram during Navratri is the usual reasonable daily fee. Indian devotees have the habit when they come for these festivals to make a donation for the maintenance and services of Babaji's ashrams. Amongst western devotees this practice is less known. Sometimes money is collected for a bandara or an 'Indianworkers fund' (to give a bonus to those who work in the ashram all the year around), or a need of a hospital and giving what you can makes you a participant in all aspects of the Ashram's activities. Babaji's ashrams are maintained and financed by His devotees. Without donations all this would quickly disappear. By

keeping it in good condition we not only benefit ourselves but also more people will have the chance to experience Him in this sacred environment. Feel inspired to be part of it.

Meetings

As it is also an occasion where people come together for more practical matters there are usually one or two meetings. These are usually only for members of the Samaj and others from international ashrams and centres. Often on the 7th & 8th day. If you do wish to participate for some reason, talk to an elder present and see if you can get an invitation. We welcome active members in our organization.



Dasheera or Dasmi

This is the 10th day of Navratri but it is separate. On this day we actually celebrate the returning of Lord Rama when He with Hanuman by His side won a fierce war over the demon king Ravana. The vibrations are noticeably different on this day and so is the program. Again there is havan and a different puja in the temple, check for the revised program. This is also the day that marriages are performed. These have to be organised in advance – so make proper arrangements and ask for more information if you are interested.

Epilogue

Once upon a time Lord Shiva and His consort Parvati Devi were sitting on mount Kailash looking at the world. Lord Shiva saw the suffering of humanity and said that it is time that I go down there to set things straight. I will go to earth as Haidakhan Baba and re-establish dharma for the people. Parvati Devi said then: I will also go to earth as Mahendra Maharaj and announce your arrival. All the attendants and ghana's who were sitting around jumped in joy and said Hurray! We are going to earth. Lord Shiva said: No you will stay here and watch it unfold from here. O' Lord please they begged let us come with You. No Lord Shiva said, I do not want you with me this time. Again they begged the Lord to allow them to come. Alright the Lord said but you will not be aware of whom you are and you will be as ignorant as everybody else on earth.....And so it happened.....and is happening !



Be happy ! The Lord of the Universe is amongst us. Show Him your deepest devotion, leave no stone unturned to do His seva. Support Him to the best of your abilities to live and enact Truth, Simplicity and Love.

Bhole Baba ki Jai !

Explanations of Terms

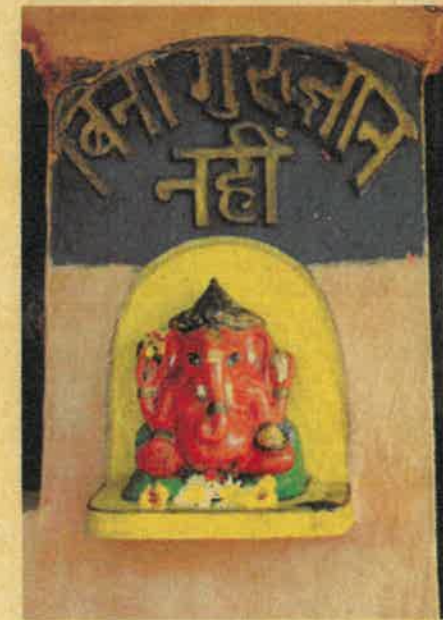
1. SADHANA

Sadhana is spiritual practice or discipline with a goal of gaining knowledge, siddhi's (spiritual powers) or liberation.

Sadhana can take very extreme forms, particularly in certain sects in India, but always with the same objective of enticing the Divine to grace the desired request.

Babaji has not asked for austere practices from us but simple practices done seriously and wholeheartedly. These can give all there is to achieve on the path.

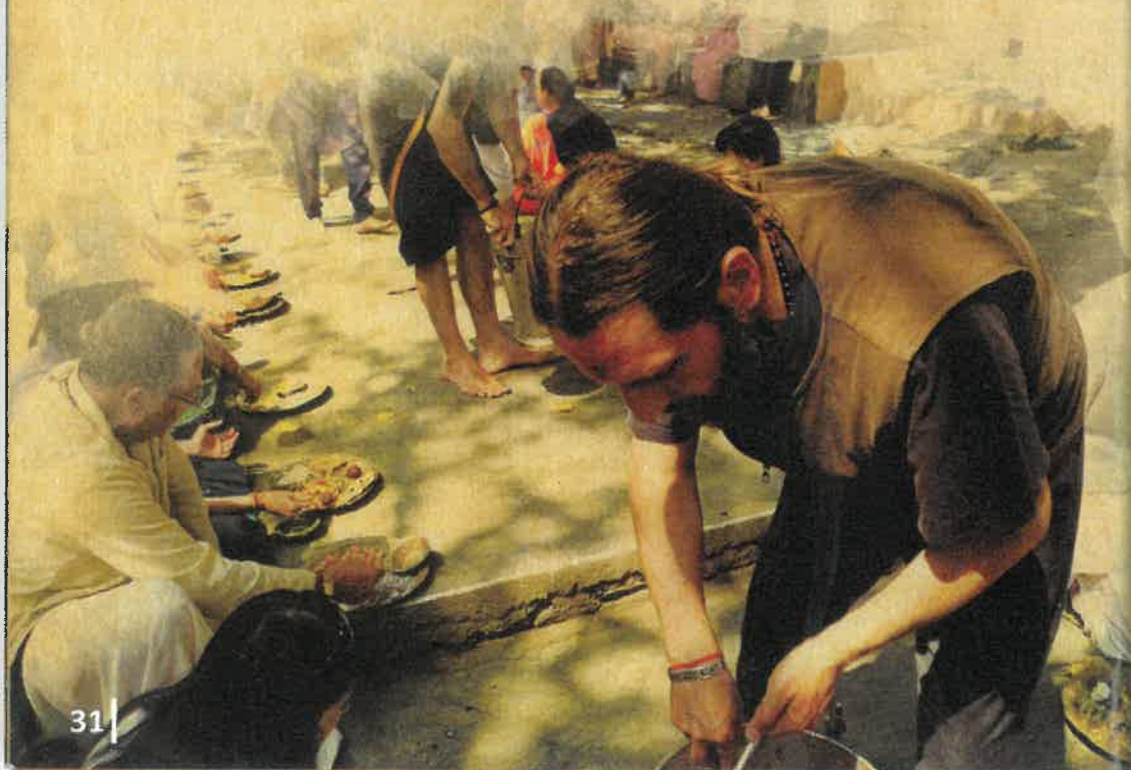
Maha Avatar Babaji is the Guru of guru's and can be the guide as well as the destination. He gave us Karma yoga, Seva (selfless service), Japa (repetition of the holy names), reading scriptures and several kinds of puja. Such practices are best done daily, and doing so also when one is tired, sick or with no time to spare, will give your practice an extra dimension. As time passes and your practice deepens it will be your best ally in life. Sadhana is not a mindless repetition of ritual or prayer. It is highly important to add awareness and devotion to your practice, and to be aware of karma, the law of



cause & effect and to behave in harmony with that. Being in the ashram and following the program may already create a sense of awakening in you but it will soon be clear that it does not happen by itself: work needs to be done! To practice in devotion and awareness the practices Babaji has given, will create a deep peace within and make you stronger to face whatever your destiny may hold, and ultimately give you freedom and the end of suffering.

2. SEVA

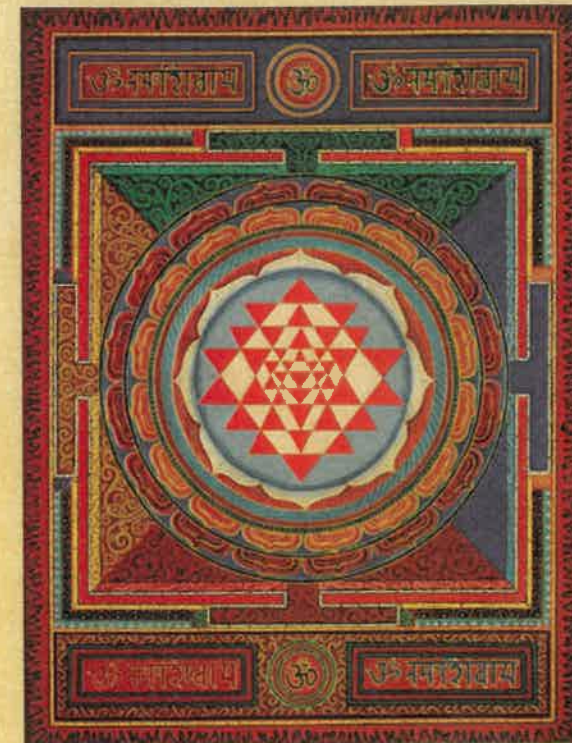
Seva means selfless service to others and is considered an important practice in many religions. The Divine is present in every human being and so serving each other is service to the Divine. One can dedicate one's life to service and pull refugees out of boats, join the Mother Teresa mission in Calcutta, etc., but it is also about helping an elderly person across the street, or doing some shopping for somebody who is unable to go for themselves. In the ashram many people are involved in some sort of seva to make the festival an uplifting experience for all and to serve the Divine in this way.



Ultimately Seva is a wonderful duty to practice constantly as there is always a suffering person to comfort or a piece of paper to pick up, making the world a better place little by little. "Living creatures are nourished by food, and food is nourished by rain; rain itself is the water of life, which comes from selfless worship and service." - Bhagavad Gita,

3. SHRI YANTRA

Of all the yantras the Shri Yantra is considered the most important. It is a perfect geometrical design which depicts a stage in the process where energy becomes matter. It is highly revered and worshipped all over India. In some explanations it is said that the opposite triangles in the design symbolise Shiva & Shakti while other schools say it is the Devi throughout. Whatever may be your opinion, or whatever you might think about it, carry it in your heart and make it a point of concentration. All forms came forth from THE MOTHER and Her vibration created these lines and perhaps from here more solid forms in the universe took shape.



4. THE GUNAS

Tamas is a state of darkness, inertia, inactivity and materiality. Tamas manifests from ignorance and deludes all beings away from spiritual truths. To reduce tamas avoid tamasic food, over sleeping, over eating, inactivity, passivity and fearful situations. Tamasic foods include heavy meats, and foods that are spoiled, chemically treated, processed or refined.

Rajas is a state of energy, action, change and movement. The nature of rajas is of attraction, longing and attachment, and rajas strongly binds us to the fruits of our work. To reduce rajas avoid rajasic foods, over exercising, over work, loud music, excessive thinking and consuming excessive material goods. Rajasic food includes fried or spicy food and stimulants.

Sattva is a state of harmony, balance, joy and intelligence. Sattva is the guna that yogis aspire to as it reduces rajas and tamas and thus makes liberation possible. To increase sattva reduce both rajas and tamas, eat sattvic foods and enjoy activities and environments that produce joy and positive thoughts. Sattvic food includes whole grains, legumes, fresh fruit, and vegetables. All of the yogic practices were developed to create sattva in the mind and body. Thus, practicing yoga and leading a yogic lifestyle strongly cultivates sattva.

The mind's psychological qualities are highly unstable and can quickly change between the different gunas.



navratri
IN THE HAIDAKHANDI TRADITION

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