





SWAMI SIVANAND SEVA SAMITI, CHIDANANDA KASHI, GANESHPUR, UTTARKASHI, UTTARAKHAND, INDIA.

Thought for the Month:

Ākāsha

- Swami Premananda

When we hear the word Akasha or Sky, we look upwards at the splendid vast blue expanse above us; limitless, boundless, beginningless, endless, infinite space.

Akasha is everywhere, yet we would look up above us; for that's the way common mind perceives the sky, the infinite. But if we look from mountain top, airplane, glider or hot air balloon, we see sky above us, below us, all around us, often with clouds floating all around, and beautiful play of colors at the time of Sun rise, sun set or after rains. It presents a stunning view.

We say the sky is blue, physics tells us the blueness is just play of lights and our perception of it through mind and senses.

There are innumerable objects, all in motion, in the Sky - the stars, planets, satellites, asteroids and comets, clouds etc.

This is our basic or gross idea about the Sky or Akasha.

But the wise men, the saints and sages have very fine intellect. They delved deep into the concept of Akasha and gave us many more concepts of Akasha. In Hindu philosophy, Akasha symbolizes unlimited space; it's like a blank canvas where innumerable universes are painted.

It has many dimensions; we hear of -

- Chidakasha Consciousness or Knowledge space of the Absolute; the all-pervading, luminous, pure awareness; it is thought of as Atma Swarupa, the natural state; Akash-roop or the knowledge of all-pervading infinite eternal existence. It is the awareness or Mental space of the Absolute; it is the very subtle feeling of "I am", the awareness of self that is also present in every atom of cosmos.
 It holds the Bhavana Akasha.
- ❖ Bhavana or Vasana Akasha Thought space, where very subtle thoughts arise, like the first wave, the first cosmic thought of the Absolute: "Let me see myself", which in other words is "I am One, let me be many"

Seva Samachar

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Ākāsha (contd.)

❖ Bhuta Akasha - Elementary Space that is perceived as Sky by us, the basis and the first most subtle element of creation of material world that contains life's energy, thoughts, and awareness, and connects everything together resulting in cosmic unity. It is the holder of everything like air, sound, heat, water, and earth element; it is an expansion of Vasana akasha that takes shape when Paramatma starts seeing itself. It is the first element of creation that resulted in Void or gap between objects, that separates, differentiates, results in many-ness, Jagat or World.

The Tanmatra Sabda or sound grossified and took the form of Bhutakash; in other words, it is an expansion of Sound.

- ❖ Sambit Akasha individual's knowledge of existence of space between 2 objects that can't be proved or measured like it is commonly said that Sun is rising from behind mountain. Though the space between the mountain and Sun is not seen, one is aware of the presence of space between the two.
- Hridaya Akasha subtle space within spiritual heart of a being
- Ghatakasha inner space within body of a being, which is one only, same as the cosmic or universal space, but seen as different or with limitation.
- ❖ Shunyakash empty space or void, the nothing that which holds everything in seed form or latent state. So, the nothingness is fullness too. शून्य (∘) = पूर्ण

Akash literally means that which takes us to knowledge. Kash = ज्ञान and Akash = ज्ञान तक

It is so subtle, so extensive and capable that it can lead us to the Absolute Knowledge.





Practical Aids to Japa By Swami Sivananda

Repetition of any Mantra or Name of the Lord is known as Japa. Japa is an important Anga of Yoga. It is a spiritual food for the hungry soul. Japa is the rod in the hand of the blind Sadhakas (aspirants) to plod on the road to Realization. Japa is the philosopher's stone or divine elixir that makes one God-like. In this iron age, practice of Japa alone can give eternal Peace, Bliss and Immortality.

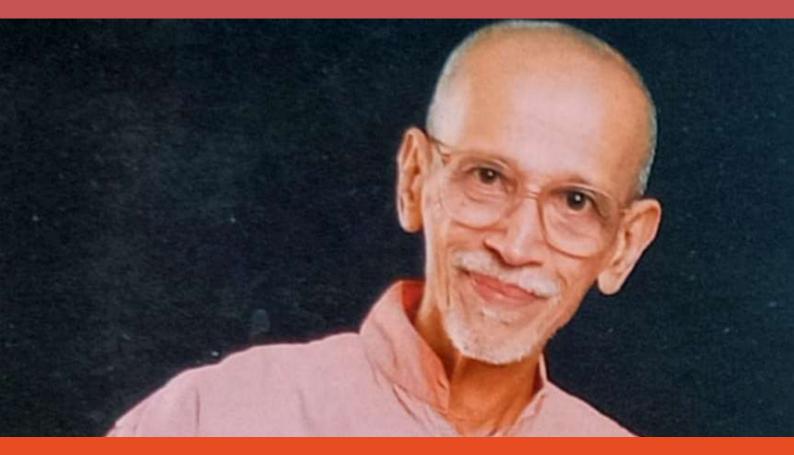
Do the Japa with feeling. Know the meaning of the Mantra. Feel God's presence in everything and everywhere. Draw closer and nearer to Him when you repeat the Japa. Think He is shining in the chambers of your heart. He is witnessing your repetition of the Mantra as He is the witness of your mind.

- 1. Select any Mantra or Name of God, preferably that given to you by your Guru, and repeat it from 108 to 1,080 times daily (one to ten malas).
- 2. Always keep your Guru-Mantra a secret. Never disclose it to anyone.
- 3. It is better to stick to one Mantra only. See Lord Krishna in Rama, Shiva, Durga, Gayatri and in everyone.
- 4. Get up at 4a.m. and do Japa for two hours. The early morning period (Brahmamuhurta) and dusk is the most favourable time for Japa and meditation. This is when Sattva (purity or steadiness) is predominant.
- 5. Take a bath or wash your hands, feet, face and mouth before sitting for Japa in the morning. At other times this is not absolutely necessary. Do Japa whenever you have leisure, at the three junctions of the day morning, noon and evening and before going to bed.
- 6. Face east or north during the practice. This enhances the efficacy of the Japa. Sit on a deer skin or rug. Spread a piece of cloth over it. This conserves body-electricity. Sit in a separate meditation room or in any suitable place, such as a temple, on a river bank or under a banyan or peepul tree.
- 7. Maintain a steady pose. Attain mastery of the posture. You must be able to sit in Padmasana, Siddhasana or Sukhasana for three hours at a stretch.
- 8. Resolve to complete a certain minimum number of malas before leaving your seat.
- 9. Recite some prayers before starting the Japa.
- 10. A rosary is a whip to goad the mind towards God. Use a Rudraksha or Tulsi mala of 108 beads.



Practical Aids to Japa (contd.)

- 11. Do not allow the mala to hang below the navel. Keep the hand near the heart or the nose.
- 12. The mala must not be visible to you or to others. Cover it with a towel or handkerchief, which must be clean and washed daily.
- 13. Use the middle finger and the thumb of the right to roll the beads. The use of the index finger is prohibited.
- 14. Do not cross the Meru while rolling the beads. Turn back when you come to it.
- 15. Sometimes do the Japa without a mala. Use a watch.
- 16. Do mental Japa for a time. When the mind wanders, do the Japa aloud, or whisper the Mantra for some time and come back to mental Japa again as soon as possible.
- 17. When you repeat the Mantra, have the feeling or mental attitude that the Lord is seated in your heart, that purity or Sattva is flowing from the Lord into your mind, that the Mantra is purifying your heart, destroying desires, cravings and evil thoughts.
- 18. Do not do the Japa in a hurried manner, like a contractor who tries to finish his work in a short time. Do it slowly with feeling, one-pointedness of mind and single-minded devotion.
- 19. Pronounce the Mantra distinctly and without any mistakes. Repeat it neither too slowly nor too fast. Increase the speed only when the mind wanders.
- 20. Be vigilant and alert during Japa. Stand up when sleep tries to overpower you.
- 21. Try to associate the Japa with the rhythm of the breath and meditate in the form of your Deity. Keep a picture or idol of the Deity in front of you. Think of the meaning of the Mantra while repeating it.
- 22. Regularity in Japa Sadhana is most essential if success is to be achieved. Sit in the same place and at the same time every day.
- 23. Do not beg for any worldly objects from God while doing Japa. Feel that your heart is being purified and that the mind is becoming steady by the power of the Mantra and the Grace of the Lord.
- 24. Observe silence and avoid distractions, calls and engagements.
- 25. It is important not to leave the place at once after the Japa is over and mix with everyone or plunge into worldly activity. Sit very quietly for at least ten minutes, humming some prayer, remembering the Lord and reflecting upon His infinite love. Then, after devout prostration, leave the place and commence your routine duties and activities. In this way the spiritual vibrations will remain intact.
- 26. Continue the current of Japa mentally at all times, whatever be the activity in which you are engaged. Carry on your Sadhana with tenacity and perseverance, without a break. Realize the glorious goal of life and enjoy supreme bliss.



From The Universal to the Universal By Swami Chidananda

The other day, when I was returning from my tour, I decided to get down at Dehra Dun instead of Hardwar. In the same compartment of the train were a Kashmiri lady and an army brigadier. They were talking about there being no provision in the India of today for the training of the youth—who are the wealth of the nation. I joined in the conversation and pointed out a number of organisations that were showing a real concern for the upcoming generation.

Finally, as we were getting close to Dehra Dun, the lady said to me, "Swamiji, you seem to know so much. Please give me some of your jnana, something that I can carry with me for my life." I said, "Look here, I have been giving it, and that should be enough. Nevertheless, as an individual aspirant approaching me, it is my duty to give you some jnana. Therefore, let me say something."

I went on, "The first jnana I want to give you is: This life is only a journey. You have come here; you don't belong here. You are on a journey, and at the end of the journey you will have to leave and go. *So, nothing is really yours here. Nor do you belong here. First truth.*

"The second truth is that when a person is on a journey, they usually have a destination to reach. What destination have you set for yourself? Is it what you were discussing with the brigadier? Is that your destination? Is that your reach? Think of it! Your destination cannot be anything here for the simple reason that you do not belong here. If you reach any destination here, it will be here and you will go elsewhere. So, you can reap no permanent benefit from whatever secular, temporal, worldly, earthly goal that you set for yourself—no matter how great it may be.

It may even be something as comprehensive as banning the use of nuclear weapons, something upon which the fate of all humanity on planet Earth hangs. It may be something as big as the United Nations or the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. All these things are trivial, for the simple reason that none of them can be your real goal; because no matter what you achieve here you will go empty-handed. You came empty-handed, you'll go empty-handed. Therefore, think!

"Third truth: All these important things that you have been discussing—that there is no proper provision in India today for the youth and that you must do something about it—is based on the egoistical feeling that there is a you and that you can do something.

"Look here, this world has been going on for hundreds and thousands of years before you and the brigadier and all people came. You come now and you will disappear like little insects coming in the rainy season having a 24-hour lifespan. Empires have come and gone. You have come and you will go. This drama of life will go on, the world will go on—another 1000 years, 2000 years, 10,000 years.



From The Universal to the Universal (contd.)

"You are nothing. There is some higher power that has been looking after this world for eons. Scientists say that the first sign of life came on planet Earth so many millions of years ago. What is your calendar of 365 days before millions of years? So don't worry about it. There is some higher power who is quite capable of looking after this world that you are so concerned about. He doesn't require Kashmiri ladies like you. You better take care of yourself, so that during this precious little human life between an entry point and an exit point that you do something to improve yourself, bring out all the latent potential within yourself.

And before you leave, try to do maximum benefit to God's creation—into which He has put you. That is the only thing that makes life worth living. Life's importance is not assessed in terms of how much you have amassed, what titles you have, how many audiences you have addressed or how many books you have written. All that is vain fancy. The value of life is in having come here, before you go how many people have been happier, how many have been benefited, how useful have you been to God's creation. Not only human beings, the whole world."

I continued, "How many tears have you wiped from crying children, orphans, widows, helpless people, from poor, suffering people in the remotest villages where there is no drinking water, no sanitation, no education—they are disease bound? Try to do something. Go there and give them a proper road; they are cut off during the monsoon season. Go not to the posh cities, but help suffering humanity in the rural areas. Bring sanitation, hygiene, medical aid. Give eye camps for those who are blinded with cataracts. Then you have done something.

Our culture, our country has as its highest ideal in life paropakara, benefiting others, being useful to others, doing something that is good for others, not only for yourself. *Paropakara is the highest ideal*. They went so far as to say that this body has been given only for this purpose. So, bring about a change in the orientation of your vision.

So, this I am telling you personally. What then is the goal? Your goal is to go back from where you came. There is a great Universal Soul. You are not this body, this cage of flesh and bones. You are not the five karma indriyas or the five jnana indriyas. You are not this mind, emotion, sentiment, imagination and various moods such as anger, passion, greed, envy, jealousy. You are not even this little "I" that you are identifying yourself with when you look in a mirror. All these are not you. You are a centre of radiant consciousness, shining consciousness—eternal, imperishable, unborn, beyond time, beyond space, infinite. Read the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita every day!"

That is how we took leave. I did not speak to her as an individual addressing an individual. I spoke as the Universal addressing the Universal in that lady. And I said that you belong to that dimension. This is a golden chance to lift yourself up from this confined consciousness to your real dimension of infinite consciousness, universal consciousness. That is why we are here.

She asked for blessings. I said, "May the Universal Consciousness grace and fulfil whatever is there in your heart, whatever you are aspiring for, whatever you are ardently longing and wishing for. May it be fulfilled!"



- Our Day begins early at 5:15 am with Vishnu Sahashranama and Saraswati Upanishad Recitation with prayers.
- Daily rituals of Mother River Ganga, Gangadhar Mahadev, Radha
 Krishna & Gurudeva are performed in the Temple
- Evening Satsang is performed with enchanting prayers offered to all Lords by reciting Mahimna Paath, Hanuman Chalisa, Ramayan Paath and Bhajans.
- Every Saturday of the week, Ramayana especially Sundarkand is recited with full fervor encompassing nearby Villagers, Students and Sadhakas.
- Every Sunday afternoon Yoga Nidra session is conducted.
- Every Monday Rudra Abhishek and Mahamrityunjaya are conducted in our Shiva Temple that all are welcome to participate in.
- Now, with thousands of subscribers and an ever-growing number of viewers, our Daily Yoga Vasishta Classes are reaching seekers across the globe. Join at 9:30 AM online to experience the divinity of one of the most significant text ever written!
- Yoga asana sessions are regularly conducted and is attended by students from nearby villages.
- Narayan Seva is providing an indispensable support to the Wandering sadhus, Pilgrims, and to underprivileged people living in the Uttarkashi Himalayan villages. Support is offered by means of Dry Ration, Money, Medical/ambulance, blankets and winter clothes and help to the poor people for houses, marriages and daily needs, etc.

Total No. of such People/ Families supported: 6









Healthcare Activities

The current running departments of Sivanand Dharmarth Chikitsalay are General OPD, Eye, Dental, Physiotherapy, Pathology Lab, Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Veterinary and Ambulance Services for referral or emergency cases.

Panchakarma department is functioning well for male and female. The Tele Medicine facility having connectivity with AIIMS Rishikesh serves many chronic patients.

The Entire Dispensary works on HIMS (Hospital Information Management System) helping in maintenance of Electronic Medical Record, Pharmacy stock & Issue details and quick generation of patient Data. This is the only hospital in the entire Uttarkashi region offering this automated service.

Every month regular mobile medical camps are organized in remote villages around the Uttarkashi for the welfare of the people staying in remote villages. Also, regular medical education is provided at schools.

The cloud enabled touch screen Health ATM, with a capacity to conduct more than 50 types of tests, provides instant reports to patients through print outs, e-mail and SMS.

The whole medical services are based on selfless-service to the needy.

Patients Attended to in Hospital OPD : 436

Eye : 358

Mobile Camp : 85

Panchakarma : 267

Physiotherapy patients : 240

Homeopathy : 67

Pathology Tests : 72

Ambulance Seva to patients : 2







Hospitality

Many Mahatmas, on their way to Gangotri, arrived in the ashram for Swamiji's darshan. They were given privilege of rest in the Ashram for a few days, along with food and medicines. Other spiritual seekers are also allowed to stay in the ashram and are given guidance in their spiritual practices. Ashram provides free food and accommodations to all these guests.

Indian guests : 09 Foreign guests : 01 Ashram inmates : 23

Annakshetra

A daily routine of free food facility of breakfast, lunch, evening tea, and dinner is served in the Annakshetra to guests, visitors and hospital patients etc. whosoever is present in the Ashram.

Total No. of People fed approximately per day: 45

Goshala

A team of Ashramites and workers are dedicated to the care of the cows and calves to cater to their needs. Also, a regular check-up and medical support is being provided by the Veterinary Department of our Hospital Wing.

Total No. Of Cows : 6 Total No. Of Calves : 2

Student support

The students needing support are identified on the basis of their educational performance, family background and annual family income. They are provided educational support in terms of fees, school uniforms, school bags, books, stationary etc.

Total No. of Students supported in the month of October: 9

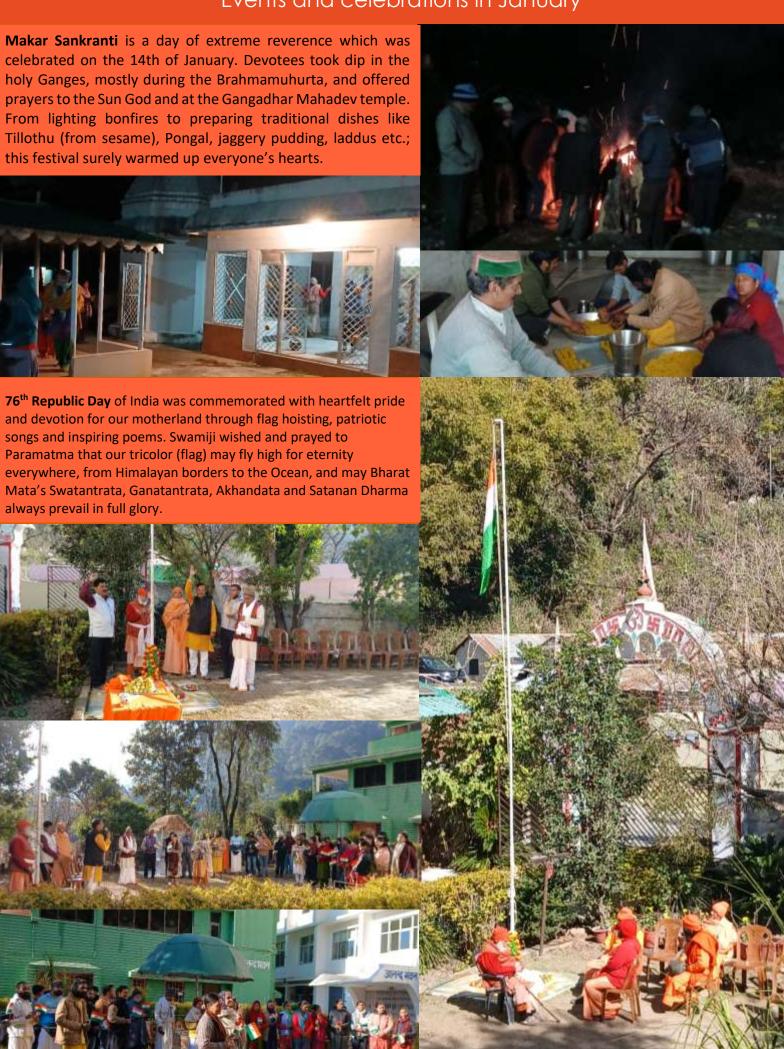








Events and celebrations in January





Teachings from Yoga Vasistha: Universe Fair (ब्रह्माण्ड मेला)

You might have heard about book fair, art and craft fair, trade fair, agricultural fair, handloom fair, tourism fair, cultural fair, religious fair like the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj or the town fair like the annual Uttarkashi fair held in January; India is renowned for its vibrant and diverse fairs, each has unique themes, location and purpose. These fairs attract large crowds, and provides glimpses of the regional customs, products, lifestyle, etc. Every fair is different, each has a unique significance. Many of you must be having unforgettable experiences at different fairs.

But have you been to the Universe Fair?

Yes! That's right. The Universe Fair.

Wondering what it is! The fair is being held at Shunya Maidan (Empty Space), the universes are the different exhibits in the fair, the Lord of each universe is welcoming us to admire the spectacle, the exuberance and the magic happening continuously in the space.

Come! Let's watch the timeless, grandest, most diverse and most intriguing live show.

It so happened; Vasishtha ji Maharaj once saw innumerable universes in Samadhi (Samyama). He narrates to Rama that the sky, which appears so empty, is actually full of unimaginable uncountable universes, which are hidden from our view (through senses and mind). Instead of the scientific limitations, scientists say that the universe is full of intelligent life. This concords with Vasishtha ji's vision. The space is full of unheard, uncountable universes. Each universe seen by him is different and unique, with different constitution and principles. Vasishtha ji could see them because of his very subtle, pure, one-pointed mind and yogic expertise.

If you feel you don't have the power and eyes of Vasishtha ji, don't worry.

Just give wings to your 6th eye, often called mind (imagination) and fly into the sky as you hear Vasishtha ji narrating about the fair. Remember to break the shackles of limitedness and enjoy the grandeur, the beauty and the variety of the many known and unknown creations.

You may question, Vasishtha ji saw it many thousands of years back. How can it be still seen! Change is the law of nature. Well, another law says, everything is available everywhere at all times under all conditions. So, what Vasishtha ji saw still eons back holds good at our times too.

But what technique did Vasishtha ji adopt? Vasishtha ji says, through his Yogic skills, he left his identity as an individual and became one with the Absolute sky or Chidakash, which is the substratum of everything. He thus became like the omnipresent endless space, the reservoir and support of everything. In that space he saw multitudes of universes which are apart from, unseen by, and unknown to one another.

Now, let's see how the fair looks like.

- * Some of these universes had no veil or covering (आवरण), some had one, some others had 5, 7, 10, 16, 24, 36 while some had the veil of the form of sky. Can you imagine!
- * Some of these universes are made up of empty elemental sky, while others are full of elements. We know of 5 basic elements namely earth, water, fire, air and sky. Some of the universes are of only 1 element like earth, some are of two elements like earth and water, some are of three elements, some are of 7 elements (time and direction are also elements in those universes). Some others are of other elements, apart from all that is known to us.
- * Some are very subtle and strangely artistic that it is inexpressible by our known languages and beyond our conception.
- * Some of the creations are in everlasting darkness, some are in deep sleep (सुषुप्ति), some are undergoing dissolution, yet some are originating from the golden womb (हिरण्यगर्भ).
- * Some universes are under the dominion of Prajapati and the devas.
- * Some universes are full of knowledge of Vedas (truth) while many others are devoid of it; in some there is decline in righteousness and Brahmin priests aren't following Vedic rituals properly.
- * Some are full of insects and worms; others are dwelled by gods, some by demons, while some others had many living beings.
- * There are universes of burning fire, while some had continuous light.
- * Few are full of water, few of wind; some are steady in the sky while some are constantly wandering.
- * Some are coming into being, some are expanding, some are full of delightful substances, some had irregular forms, some are gaining strength.
- * In some, the universes are inter-penetrative, there are universes within other universes like layers in banana tree, they are growing or have grown within supposed sheaths of atoms.
- * Many are growing unseen and unknown to each other, never thought of together, like the dreams of soldiers which are unseen by others.
- * There are endless varieties of creations in the unbounded endless space, all of different natures and manners. There are no two things of the same character and feature. Some are boundless, some are pure like transparent sky, some in abrupt state, while in some there are different activities going on.
- * There are universes one over another in which beings move from one sphere to another after death in one sphere.
- * There are many big elemental bodies of different forms; in some the directions and mountains looked completely different.
- * In further narration, he says it is impossible to comprehend the unusual things with our finite intellect. In the orb of the light of consciousness, he sees very subtle universes, some shining like jewels, and the bright radiating light makes it impossible for us to see them.
 - Isn't that fine! We already have seen so many universes! The mind is already reeling of seeing much for long; there is so much diversity, there are totally unfamiliar universes; poor fellow! it's struggling to picturize them all.

Oh! This reminds me, have you ever taken a ride in a merry-go-round? It's exciting. When you reach the top, you can see the entire fair with all the stalls, people, activities at a glance, in a moment. You enjoy wide angle vision. While on the ground, one sees one thing at a time. Similar is my case. I'm seeing these universes one by one, that too not completely; it's my limitedness. Vasishtha ji enjoys wide angle vision, he saw everything clearly in a moment, effortlessly, like seeing a multi-dimensional motion picture, from his comfortable seat (asana).

But are you also wondering why Vasishtha ji, the best of Sages, who has always been telling that there is no world, world is only imagination, is taking us through these universe fair. There must be a good cause. I'm wondering what precious gifts are we going to bring back from the fair! We will see it and more in the next issue.



One who follows the principles of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji—Serve, Love, Give—is welcome to become a member of Swami Sivanand Seva Samiti. We are extending our family to all those who will selflessly serve the philanthropic and humanitarian cause and pursuit of Swami Sivanand Seva Samiti.

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

I am privileged to be a part of Swami Sivanand Seva Samiti, Chidananda Kashi, Ganeshpur, Uttarkashi.

My details:

Name:

AGE:

OCCUPATION:

ADDRESS:

PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL:

Pease send us the above information by email to: swami.premananda@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP PLANS

- LIFE MEMBERSHIP: RS. 25000/ for corpus fund
- REGULAR MEMBERSHIP:
 RS. 200 PER MONTH OR
 RS. 2000 PER YEAR
- NO PRIVILEGES—WE ARE ALL DEVOTEES. ACCESS TO STAY IN THE ASHRAM IS A SADHANA

www.sivanandsevasamiti.org

HOW TO DONATE

ANNA DANAM Rs. 3, 100 for 100 people per day

VASTRA DANAM Rs. 2, 100 for 1 person for Blanket, Sweaters and clothes

CHIKITSA DANAM Rs. 1, 100 for 1 week and Rs. 5001 for 1 month per person

VIDYA DANAM Rs. 5, 001 for 1 student per year

GAU SEVA Rs. 5, 100 for 1 Cow per month

BHANDARA Contact us for details



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WE ARE ON THE WEB!

www.sivanandsevasamiti.org

click here for our Youtube Channel

click here for our Facebook Page

Swami Sivanand Seva Samiti is rendering one of the greatest services to humanity and mankind through **Sivanand Dharmarth Chikitsalay**. Keeping healthcare as an emerging need and responsibility to address, Samiti would extend its philanthropic medical arm to more and more people and connect for longer period. In the wake of it, there is a need of Corpus Fund to spearhead the cause.

Like-minded people are welcome to support this endeavour towards the noble cause of healthcare. The interest generated out of the Corpus Fund is being used for the medical help in the rural areas.

SUPPORT US:

SWAMI SIVANAND SEVA SAMITI supports needy people through various seva, right from education to health in many ways. Everybody is welcome to support the Samiti by being a part of these various SEVAS. For all Donations and **Fund transfer from India or Abroad**, reach us at swami.premananda@gmail.com. All donations should be sent with full name, address, and PAN Card Details.





