

Yagya conveys enlightening philosophical teachings and is also a high level science

- a discourse of Revered Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya

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Abstract. This article presents English translation and discussion of some excerpts of a discourse of Revered Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya (Acharyashri), in which, with reference to the Vedic and other ancient scriptures, Acharyashri explains in detail various enlightening philosophical teachings (which include righteous knowledge, diligent endeavors, virtuous emotions thoughts actions, propagation of virtues, generosity, caring, etc.) and scientific principles (purification of the physical and subtle environment, sharing, therapy for physical or mental or spiritual ailments, creation of parjanya (prana - vital life force), leaving vicious tendencies and adopting virtuous tendencies, etc.), associated with the physical and subtle virtuous conduct of the fire-ritual of yagya, which can lead to the awakening of divinity (virtuous tendencies) in human beings, and revival of the ancient era of truth and harmony (Satyug) on the earth; this in turn can lead to the solution of various problems faced by humanity today, both at the individual and the global level.

Perspective on a discourse of Revered Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya (in Hindi language) on the topic "यज्ञ एक शिक्षण भी, उच्चस्तरीय विज्ञान भी" (which can be translated as 'Yagya conveys enlightening philosophical teachings and is also a high level science') – the Hindi text of this discourse is available in the April 2008 to July 2008 issues of the Akhand Jyoti (Hindi) magazine [1-4], and the audio file of this discourse is available in reference [5].

Keywords. Yagya, Fire-ritual, Philosophical Teachings, Scientific Principles.

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PUBLISHED BY

Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya Gayatrikunj-Shantikunj Haridwar, India

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Introduction

This article presents English translation and discussion of some excerpts of a discourse of Revered Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya (Acharyashri) (in Hindi language) on the topic "यज्ञ एक शिक्षण भी, उच्चस्तरीय विज्ञान भी" (which can be translated as 'Yagya conveys enlightening philosophical teachings and is also a high level science') [1–5]. This discourse was delivered by Acharyashri sometime before June 1979, as he mentions that research on Yagya-pathway will be started as early as next year – and research on Yagyopathy was done in Brahmavarchas, which was established in June 1979.

In this discourse, with reference to the Vedic and other ancient scriptures, Acharyashri describes yagya as a manifestation of the divine. He explains in detail various enlightening philosophical teachings and scientific principles, associated with the physical and subtle virtuous conduct of the fire-ritual of yagya, which can lead to the awakening of divinity (virtuous tendencies) in human beings, and revival of the ancient era of truth and harmony (Satyug) on the earth; this in turn can lead to the solution of various problems faced by humanity today, both at the individual and the global level.

Acharyashri begins by telling that Rigveda is the first Veda, and the first mantra (verse) of Rigveda (verse is available here <http://www.literature.awgp.org> or book or rigveda or v1.25) [6] praises yagya, prays to it, and describes it as a manifestation of the divine (God) [1]. If someone wants to see God in physical form, then there is only one form, and that is Agni or Yagyagni (fire of yagya); it has been called Purohit (priest or representative of God), which imparts teachings through its physical and subtle virtuous conduct, and not by delivering sermon or discourse.

Six teachings

Yagyagni (fire of yagya) conveys six enlightening philosophical teachings [1, 2].

First teaching

First, whenever fire burns, light is produced. In spiritual context, this light represents 'gyana

(pure righteous knowledge)', 'atma-gyan (self-realization)' 'divine light', 'tamaso ma jyotirgamaya (emancipation of inner self from darkness of ignorance into eternal light of pure knowledge)', enlightenment, spiritual awakening, and, adoption of wisdom, discerning righteous intellect, righteous virtues or ideals, supreme moral principles within the self [1]. Once this pure knowledge is awakened within the inner self, it helps in the resolution of internal problems, eradication of vices, and development of virtuous tendencies; the person learns to observe each situation very closely and keenly, to distinguish between the right and the wrong, and to have courage to adopt the right thing [1]. The person continues to move ahead on the bright and pristine path of divine light (becomes a gyana-yogi), wherein all the emotions, thoughts and actions are devoted to righteous pursuits; such a person can solve one's own problems, as well as provide guidance to others also.

Second teaching

Second, whenever fire burns, heat and warmth are produced [1]. Heat is produced by friction, i.e. movement or activity or action, which signifies continuous diligent endeavors and efforts for progress of the self and the society [1]. Several examples have been quoted where the systems never sit idle - such as various internal organs or systems of human body, various public service departments, etc.; thus, a follower of yagya should be a karma-yogi (dedicated to continuous righteous endeavors), wherein all the emotions, thoughts and actions are devoted to continuous progress, caring and altruistic service towards the self, the family and the society [1]. Here Acharyashri warns that if one tries to escape from hard work and stay idle or lethargic, then that person will have to bear Nature's wrath in the form of various kinds of diseases and sufferings; so, as long as a person is alive, one must be busy in righteous endeavors [1].

Third teaching

Third, whenever fire burns, the flame always moves upwards [2]; one cannot force the flame to move downwards; excessive pressure may force

the flame downwards for some time (as in welding), but as soon as the pressure is reduced, the flame again moves upwards - this signifies that the emotions, thoughts, actions, beliefs, faith, ideals of a person must always move upwards, i.e. should be supreme, righteous, virtuous and pristine; this way personality can be elevated to higher realms of human existence [2]. A person should not bend one's head in front of injustice, and should always uphold justice, divinity (righteous virtues) [2].

Fourth teaching

Fourth, whatever is offered in the yagya fire, is converted to fire by it, i.e. acquires the virtues and ideals of the fire [2]. Thus, a follower of yagya must strive to disseminate the righteous virtues, ideals and tendencies in one's personality, to others who come in contact; should strive to make the entire world noble and divine [2]. The follower of yagya should not acquire the vices of others, but instead influence others through one's own virtuous tendencies, so that virtuous tendencies may flourish more and more [2]. The fourth teaching also signifies that the yagya fire believes and propagates the virtues of universal equality; it does not distinguish between anything that is offered to it, and converts everything into fire [2]. Similarly, follower of yagya should not support any kind of inequality prevalent in the modern society like inequality on the basis of wealth, gender, caste, creed, etc. (which is the root cause of so many vices, injustice, unjust customs and traditions, etc.), and should adopt the principles of universal equality [2]. The follower must believe in *atmavat sarbhuteshu*, i.e. consider everyone equal and same as oneself.

Fifth and sixth teaching

The Fifth and Sixth teachings are connected to each other - Fifth, yagya fire doesn't store whatever is offered in it; and Sixth, yagya fire generously evaporates or sublimates everything that is offered in it, for the use, welfare, and nurturing of entire Nature or cosmos, and animate or inanimate beings [2]. Thus, a follower of yagya must not store more than one's need, and gen-

erously share or distribute or disseminate one's efforts, resources, thoughts and emotions for the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social welfare and upliftment of the masses [2]. The follower must be full of compassion for everyone, should feel others' suffering as one's own, and put in diligently efforts to relieve the same; this is what a life built upon the principles of yagya signifies, i.e. the life of sharing and caring for the welfare of all [2].

Summary of teachings

Finally, Acharyashri summarizes this section on the six philosophical teachings of yagya by telling that if these six teachings are imbibed in the nature and conduct of human beings, then these would lead to the awakening of divinity within them (some personality traits associated with the awakening of divinity within oneself are compiled in these references [7, 8]), leading to the creation of a new righteous society and heavenly conditions on the earth. This in turn would ascertain global peace and well-being [2].

Six scientific principles

In the next section of this discourse, Acharyashri has described six scientific principles associated with yagya [2], which significantly benefit the Nature and human beings in different ways [2].

First principle

First scientific principle deals with the purification of the physical environment. He draws attention to the fact that everyone is aware that mills, factories, industries create a large amount of pollution, but has anyone ever thought that the large population of human beings also pollute the earth a lot [2]. Thus, it is the social and moral responsibility of every human being to work towards purifying the Nature and environment; yagya is an extremely effective technique in this regard (that is why, in ancient times, it was compulsory for everyone to do yagya daily) [2]. Detailed description about the effectiveness of yagya in removing environmental pollution can be read in these references [9, 10]. By doing yagya, a person can spread fragrant

and medicinal fumes or substances in the environment, which help in reducing pollutant gases, pathogens, etc. [9, 10].

Second principle

Second scientific principle deals with the virtuous act of sharing one's resources for everyone's welfare [3]. Whatever nutritious or fragrant substances, medicinal herbs, etc. are put in the yagya fire, are evaporated or sublimated by it, and the vapors thus produced spread far and wide to nurture the Nature, and nourish all living beings [3]. Thus, whatever is offered to yagya, it generously shares all of it with others; this virtuous tendency must be learnt from it [3]. Also, yagya can be one of the best methods of sharing one's food and nutritional resources with everyone, as it vaporizes these and spreads them in a wide area [3].

Third principle

Third scientific principle deals with the application of yagya as a therapy for the treatment of physical, mental and emotional or spiritual diseases or disorders [3]. Acharyashri discusses the mode of action of yagya-therapy as follows: he cites the example of Homeopathy, and other therapeutic techniques, wherein, the more dilute or minute or fine (subtle) the medicine, the more effective or strong it is [3]; another example given by him is that of progressive advancement of modern therapeutic techniques from oral intake of medicine in the form of a pill, to that of injection, to that of nasal inhalation, wherein nasal inhalation of medicine in the form of vapors is considered one of the most effective modes of drug delivery [3]. Similarly, in the fire ritual of yagya, coarse powder made up of dry plant-medicines (havan samagri), as well as selected nutritious and aromatic substances, undergoes transformation into vapor phase [3]; these phytomedicines spread along with the volatile substances and gases, released by the slow and controlled combustion process in yagya fire [9–13]. In addition, frequent oral and nasal inhalation of phytomedicines, present in the medicinal-fumes generated in yagya, takes place because of the rhythmic deep breathing ex-

ercise (pranayama) and chanting of certain Vedic hymns (mantras) by the participants throughout the duration of the yagya, which contributes to the efficient pulmonary administration of phytomedicines, and the desired therapeutic benefit [3, 9–13]. Acharyashri tells that in ancient times yagya was used for the treatment of various kinds of diseases (physical, mental, spiritual or emotional), including even those that were otherwise considered incurable [3]. Here he also mentions that just like ancient saints or sages, in the present time, research on Yagya-pathy will be started again by him as early as next year (this indicates that this discourse must have been delivered some time before June 1979 because research on Yagyopathy was done in Brahmavarchas, which was established in June 1979), and this can lead to the development of an effective methodology (Yagyopathy) for the treatment of various kinds of diseases prevalent in the modern times [3]. There are various kinds of mental disorders such as anger, selfishness, anxiety, tendency of stealing, being treacherous and cunning, jealousy, etc. for which an effective, long term treatment is not readily available; Acharyashri tells that in ancient times, such mental disorders were treated through yagya, and for this every human being had to come in contact with yagya sixteen times, at specific stages during the entire life span [3] (he is referring to the sixteen sacramental rites (shodash sanskar), done during different stages of one's life, starting from before birth, until after death; these sacramental rites were done along with yagya, and involved special spiritual procedures or teachings or inspirations, relevant to that stage of life, so that the mental state of the person remained pristine and noble – more details about these sacramental rites can be read here – [14–16]). Yagya was also used for the treatment of spiritual disorders, which include lack of faith, lack of emotional sensitivity, lack of benevolence, etc. [3]. Therefore, in ancient times, it was mandatory for everyone to do yagya daily [3]. Thus, yagya was an effective therapeutic procedure in ancient times, and can be similarly developed and applied in present times as well [3].

Fourth principle

Fourth scientific principle deals with the creation of parjanya (prana – vital life force) by yagya [3]. Parjanya (prana) created through yagya spreads in the environment, and comes down on earth along with rains; this parjanya (prana) is absorbed by the earth, resulting in the cultivation of stronger or more nutritious or more effective crops, grass, medicinal herbs, etc. [3]; when these are consumed by human beings and other living beings, they become stronger, healthier, and their immunity is significantly enhanced - this was one of the primary reasons for the superior health and long life of people in ancient times, when yagya was performed regularly [3].

Fifth principle

Fifth scientific principle deals with the cleansing of the subtle environment [4]. Subtle environment may be defined as follows: when a huge collection of similar kinds of thoughts and emotions are in practice for a sufficiently long duration, these create something like a dense cloud in the subtle realm, leading to the creation of a subtle environment, which in turn affects the thoughts, emotions and tendencies of human beings [4, 9–12]. An example in this regard can be found in the holy Indian scripture, Ramayana [4]. When Lord Shri Ram defeated Ravana and came back to Ayodhya, then his spiritual guide Guru Vashishtha told him that killing the demons and destroying Lanka was not sufficient; the demonic tendencies and deeds of the demons had significantly vitiated the subtle environment, and if this was not purified, then these tendencies would affect the future generations, who would automatically inherit these tendencies; thus, cleansing of the subtle environment, i.e. the eradication of demonic tendencies from the subtle realm was also important [4]. Since various aspects of yagya cleanse the subtle environment, upon the suggestion of Guru Vashishtha, Lord Shri Ram did Ashwamedha Yagya ten times, for creating an environment conducive for the establishment of Ram Rajya (rule of righteousness) [4]. Similarly, after winning the war of Mahabharata, Pandavas

were advised by Lord Krishna to do a Rajasuya Yagya for purification of the subtle environment, which had been vitiated due to the devilish emotions, thoughts and deeds of Kauravas and their associates [4]. Further, Acharyashri states that a similar situation can be seen in the present times in the form of two world wars, wherein widespread moral and ethical degradation has significantly vitiated the subtle environment, which in turn is affecting the next generations [4]; therefore, he propagated and implemented the philosophy and science of yagya for the cleansing of the subtle environment [9–12].

Sixth principle

Sixth scientific principle deals with the procedure of deva-dakshina (giving gift to the deities) done at the end of yagya [4]. In this procedure, it is realized that deities don't accept material gifts; instead, since they are ensemble of virtuous tendencies, they expect to receive a commitment that the participants of yagya will leave vicious tendencies, and adopt divine virtues or ideals [4]. Therefore, the procedure of deva-dakshina involves taking a pledge to leave at least one vicious tendency or bad habit ingrained in the personality, and adopt one virtuous tendency or good habit, and the deities provide strength and willpower to fulfill this pledge (a list of some such habits or tendencies can be read here - <http://literature.awgp.org> or book or *kram_kand_bhaskarorv1.46*[17]).

Summary of principles

In the end of the discourse, Acharyashri summarizes by telling that yagya may thus be considered as a manifestation of the divine, as it has both the attributes of the divine, i.e. eradication of vices and harmful elements (such as diseases, jealousy, ego, insensitivity, etc.), and establishment or development of supreme moral righteous virtues or ideals, and beneficial elements (such as righteous knowledge, diligence, sharing, caring, cleanliness, parjanya (prana), etc.) [4]. If human beings adopt the righteous tendencies or practices demonstrated through the physical and subtle virtuous conduct of yagya (i.e. lead a life in conformity with the principles of yagya

(yagyiya jivan)), then it would definitely lead to the development of divinity (virtuous tendencies) within them, which in turn would lead to the creation of heaven-like conditions on the earth (i.e. a state of universal peace and harmony) [4].

Discussion and conclusion

In the present time, Acharyashri himself led a life conforming to the philosophical and scientific principles of yagya, and showed that a spiritually uplifted personality thus attained can be extremely beneficial to the society [18, 19].

In view of the above, Acharyashri organized a series of yagyas in different parts of the country under the auspices of Gayatri Pariwar, with the aim of social reformation, including eradication of social evils like dowry, addictions, unjust customs and traditions, etc., resolution of economic problems including poverty, unemployment, etc., propagation of mass education, social and moral upliftment, etc. [5, 10]. The grand yagyas conducted by him were special spiritual experiments aimed at refinement of the subtle environment, for awakening the divinity indwelling within the human beings, and revival of Satyug (era of truth) on the earth [5, 10]. So far, 46 grand Ashwamedha Yagyas have been conducted by Gayatri Pariwar in India and abroad, for achieving the above aim, and the results have been extremely promising. Apart from this, one altar yagya and deep (wick-lamp) yagyas are performed in every household to propagate the philosophy of yagya among the masses [5, 10]. Everyone is advised to make yagya a compulsory part of their daily routine, either as a one altar yagya, or a deep yagya, or balivashva [5, 10], or a fireless yagya (done at the level of thoughts or emotions [10, 18]), with primary focus on the philosophical and scientific principles of yagya, so that virtuous tendencies can be developed and nurtured within oneself, family and society [10].

Acknowledgements: Authors would like to acknowledge the subtle guidance of their spiritual guide, [Revered Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya](#), who founded the organization - All World Gayatri Pariwar.

Compliance with ethical standards: Not required.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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